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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Rumblings of Revolution

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

MANILA, MANAGUA

> We stood for democracy in the Philippines. We have to stand for democracy in Nicaragua.
>
> —*President Reagan*

The analogy is preposterous. In Haiti and the Philippines we withdrew our support—at last—from dictatorships we'd embraced for decades. In Nicaragua Reagan wants us to finance a guerrilla war against the government. To subsume these two exercises under the general rubric of "intervention" (or "assist-[ing] in the transition to democracy," as this week's NEW REPUBLIC editorial delicately puts it) is to abandon all capacity for making distinctions. Yet this is the lesson that defenders of aid to the *contras*—and of a generally belligerent foreign policy—want us to draw from the events of the past few weeks.

The United States never "intervened" against Ferdinand Marcos when he still had a grip on power. Far from it. Less than a year ago, the administration was asking for a 150 percent increase in military aid to his regime (using arguments similar to the ones now made for aid to the *contras*). It's said now that Marcos was completely out of touch with reality by the end. But who can blame him for thinking that Washington wouldn't begrudge him a little stolen election? Who can suppose that the United States would have given him the push if the Filipinos themselves hadn't forced our hand? As for Nicaragua, if all Reagan proposed was offering Daniel Ortega a free plane ride out and a safe haven for his collection of designer sunglasses, few would object.

Ironically, even as they draw a fatuous parallel between the Philippines and Nicaragua, conservative distinction-makers are working overtime to explain why the lessons of the Philippines *don't* apply to more obvious places like South Korea and South Africa, where we continue to maintain friendly relations with oppressive regimes, hoping that "quiet diplomacy" and "constructive engagement" will do the trick.

It should be obvious—but apparently it isn't—that trying to start a war is a graver step than trying to stop one. The first step isn't always wrong and the second isn't always right. But what's missing from the case for the *contras* is any sense that war is not a chess game. The inevitable ambiguities (Are the Sandinistas committed Leninists? Are the *contras* committed democrats?) and uncertainties (What can this war achieve?) ought to weigh more heavily when you're fomenting violence. According to the *Washington Times*, administration officials have "hinted strongly that the Marxist Sandinista government is employing subtle methods to manipulate press reports on Nicaragua." *Subtle methods*, the bounders! No one can accuse the administration of subtle methods in its campaign for *contra* aid. The reference to "subtle methods" concerns a document outlining an alleged Sandinista "disinformation campaign" against Reagan's proposal. The administration has made a great to-do about this document. Revealing an unexpected flair for drama, CIA director William Casey showed copies in plain brown wrappers to some members of Congress at a White House briefing. But they won't release the document, saying it's classified. Nevertheless, Reagan officials have been sharing the contents with friendly journalists. (This from an administration that wants lie detector tests for thousands of government employees to prevent classified leaks.)

So what does the mystery document say? A "senior administration official" summarizes: "What you have here is a Communist government, allied to the Soviet Union, undertaking a very well-organized effort, with the help of certain Americans, to change a vote in Congress." You mean, like the Marxist government in Angola hiring the lobbying firm of Reagan's buddy Robert Gray, for $50,000 a month, to campaign against aid to the rebels in Angola? Something like that? Hot stuff. The notion that there's something illicit about a foreign government enlisting sympathetic Americans in an effort, organized or otherwise, to affect legislation will be news to supporters of Israel, among others.

Many aspects of Reagan's own campaign for *contra* aid might be called "disinformation" if the deception weren't so transparent. The administration clings to the fiction that the part of its proposed aid that isn't actually going to buy weapons is in some sense "humanitarian"—a distinction that must create work for dozens of guerrilla accountants. (And one that was invented, for American fund-raising purposes, by the terrorist Irish Republican Army.)

The administration also still claims that its goal is not to bring down the Nicaraguan government. "We continue to believe that a negotiated settlement represents the ultimate hope for peaceful change," Secretary of State Shultz said March 3, though asking Reaganites what the Nicaraguan government could negotiate short of its own demise brings nothing but winks.

My favorite logical contortion is how administration supporters explain away the fact that Nicaragua's neighbors and all the major Latin American nations oppose the *contra* war: they secretly support it, you understand, but they're afraid to say so, for fear of the Sandinistas' wrath. Let's see, now. American right-wingers can divine these leaders' true desire, and report it in the newspapers, but the Sandinistas remain hoodwinked? Or alternatively, the Sandinistas, although bent on regional conquest, will give any country a pass whose leaders demur to say publicly what they are known to think privately? And the Latin leaders are so sure the Sandinistas are obsessed with this rather fine point that they will risk losing American support for the *contra* campaign that they actually—secretly—think is essential to their survival? I might shake my head in disbelief at the workings of the Latin mind, if this whole conceit weren't actually a product of North American thinking.

Support for the *contras* is one of the rare issues in the course of the Reagan administration where the president will have to change the public's mind if he wants to get his way. Reagan's vaunted "leadership" has consisted, by and large, of leading people where they already want to go. But there is no national support for starting a war in Nicaragua. White House supporters portray the opponents of *contra* aid as a timorous liberal elite, paralyzed by Vietnam. In fact, the *contra* campaign itself is almost entirely a creation of elite opinion. A higher quality of disinformation will be required to change that.

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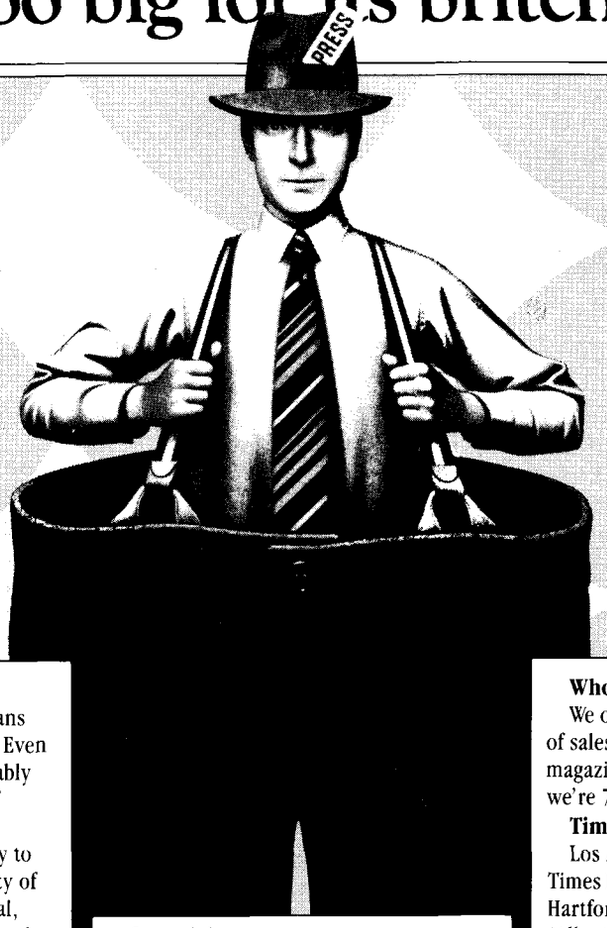

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CORRESPONDENCE

PEN PALS

To the editors:

I was delighted to see you hold up Kurt Vonnegut to scorn for his unpatriotic behavior at the PEN Congress, on your cover and in the thoughtful reportage by Edward Rothstein, which graced your issue of February 24 ("Lead Me Not into PEN Station"). Mr. Vonnegut was not quoted, however, although he made three appearances—at a panel on censorship in the USA on Wednesday, January 15; at a reading from one of his works later the same day; and then at a panel on the statesman's view of the imagination of the state on Friday, January 17. That was the full extent of his participation, and you had a reporter there, thank goodness. Please, please, please, give us at least a little sample of the stupid or annoying or un-American things he said at the congress, and I repeat, *at the congress.*

I can't stand him myself.

KURT VONNEGUT
New York, New York

Edward Rothstein replies:

I was delighted to see how little Mr. Vonnegut shares with his counterpart at the congress. That Mr. Vonnegut never voiced a word of dissent about the goings-on. At the session on censorship he asked: If the police can be called when a neighbor parks in front of a fire hydrant, why can't the FBI be called in the case of a book burning?

Imagine, I would have to check with the bureau before consigning my worn copy of *Slaughterhouse Five* to the trash bin. Moreover, he later compared the nature of the state with his experience as supervisor of American POWs in Dresden. Just as he wielded absolute power over rationing and work assignments, so does the state impose its economic and social policies. This simplified view of the state marked the congress's discussions as a whole.

These habits of turning complexities into cartoons make it difficult to see just what Mr. Vonnegut is up to. After all, he is a vice president of American PEN and was a member of the planning committee of the congress. Does he then support what occurred? Dissent from it? Wish to express some point of view other than ironic lampoonery? If so, would he please, please, please, give a small sample of his reasoning. As it is, he just lends support to my argument—which wasn't that the congress was "unpatriotic" or "un-American," but that it was a demonstration of how writers fail to think clearly and take responsibility for their positions.

QUOTAS FOR VOTES

To the editors:

William Saletan's article "Race for Office" (February 24) provides an amusing and informative account of GOP attempts to propel some relatively inexperienced and unknown blacks to positions of political leadership within their party. But his thesis that these attempts constitute affirmative action relies on a debatable analogy. The GOP is simply continuing a long-standing political tradition in which parties seek to have balanced leadership representing all the ethnic or regional voting blocs from which they believe they can gain a significant number of votes. Thus, rather than propelling someone other than the best person for the job in an effort to promote the social and moral aims associated with affirmative action, the GOP is merely choosing who it thinks is the best person to accomplish the goals of the job—a job of securing greater electoral support.

ALLEN RUBIN
Associate Professor
The University of Texas at Austin

HAITI'S HUMAN RIGHTS

To the editors:

Your editorial "Don't Blink" (March 3), which states that the administration "acquitted itself well" in the Haiti crisis, demonstrates the State Department's success in turning a foreign policy embarrassment into a public relations coup even with your informed staffers. The key phrase is "when rioting broke out against the regime of President-for-Life Jean-Claude Duvalier, the administration suspended aid on human rights grounds." It is noteworthy that rioting, rather than human rights violations, provoked suspension of rights-conditioned aid, and it belies the fact that State had actually been more concerned with Duvalier's stability than his repression of dissent.

For years the administration routinely certified that Haiti had shown "improvement" in human rights despite Duvalier's dismal record on political freedoms. The most recent of those reports was sent to Capitol Hill in late October. In late January, little more than three months later, administration officials themselves cited a deterioration of human rights conditions during the previous *six* months as the reason for cutting off aid. Let's not miss the lessons to be learned in Haiti by mistaking emergency crisis management for the moral policy the administration would like us to retrospectively believe existed all the time.

PETER BRANDRISS
Council on Hemispheric Affairs
Washington, D.C.

LOW-LEVEL LIES

To the editors:

Regarding your article "Age of Celebritics" by Mickey Kaus (February 24): the article was a complete pack of lies! I was not a "middle-level Carter operative." I was a "low-level Carter operative."

FRED S. DROZ
National Project Director
Hands Across America
Los Angeles, California

CUSTOMIZING CHILD CUSTODY

To the editors:

Justice Richard Neely proposes abdication of judicial responsibility in awarding custody of children in favor of a per se rule based on a concept of the "primary caretaker" ("Barter in the Courts," February 10). I realize that he would argue that the best interests of the child are served by this rule, but its premises are flawed.

The main thrust of the argument for the "primary caretaker" rule is that its application avoids using custody fights as leverage in awards of property, support, and alimony. It is not too difficult to consider the financial aspects of divorce separate from the considerations of child custody. In fact, to link the two is totally inappropriate and should be and generally is avoided by the courts.

The primary caretaker may perform that function coldly or bloodlessly but still be awarded custody. Unless the factors of love and affection can be placed in the equation, no proper award of cus-

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MARCH 24, 1986

THE CASE FOR THE CONTRAS

The upcoming vote in Congress on military aid to the Nicaraguan *contras* is one of the most important foreign policy votes of the decade. The future of Central America hinges on its outcome.

The position of the *contras* is precarious. They certainly have people: anywhere from 14,000 to 20,000, depending on whom you believe. That represents about twice the number of guerrillas in El Salvador, a country with about twice the population of Nicaragua. And about three times the number of Sandinista troops at the time of the overthrow of Somoza.

They also have people on the home front. Not even the most anti-*contra*-aid congressman denies that the Sandinistas have become extremely unpopular. Among those strongly opposed to Sandinista rule is the Church, the most popular institution in Nicaraguan society. The pope's divisions are not the only disaffected. These now include ordinary people deprived of the necessities of life in a wrecked economy; the business and middle classes, which have been denied the promises of freedom; and many intellectuals, some in exile, who don't relish life as functionaries of the state. The *contras*, a peasant army, themselves represent the deep resentment in the countryside at Sandinista offenses to tradition and religion. Add to that the general uprising of the Miskitos against Sandinista colonialism, and you have a vast popular opposition. These are the people whose hopes would be betrayed by the liquidation of the armed resistance and the consolidation of Sandinista rule, which will be the inevitable result of an American denial of military aid to the *contras*.

But if they are so many, why haven't they already won? For the same reason Solidarity, ten million strong, lost in Poland. Under Leninist regimes, Philippine-style "people power" does not do terribly well. Nor do vastly outgunned, out-trained guerrilla armies do well against Cuban-Soviet-style military machines.

The Soviets have poured something on the order of $500 million in arms into Nicaragua in the last five years. Since 1984 the U.S. has been prevented from sending the *contras* a penny's worth of arms. The recent delivery of helicopter gunships to the Sandinistas, reportedly piloted in combat by Cubans, has been decisive. It has made it extremely difficult for the *contras* to move and to resupply. In the absence of antiaircraft weaponry, they are quite defenseless.

As a result, *contra* advances and successes in the past several years are being reversed. In the last six months, particularly since the introduction of the MI-24 gunships, all but between 3,000 and 6,000 *contras* have been driven from Nicaragua. The rest are in Honduran camps waiting for arms. In civil wars numbers alone can't determine the outcome, particularly if one's side is barely armed.

And also barely trained. Again out of congressional scrupulousness, the U.S. military has been prohibited from training and professionalizing the *contra* forces, as it has done in El Salvador with a resulting marked improvement in the country's human rights record. It is somewhat paradoxical to argue that we shouldn't be training the *contras* because they are so undisciplined when one of the major reasons this peasant army remains undisciplined is that the U.S. military is prohibited from training it.

Thus the upcoming vote will be critical. Without military aid, the *contras* will fight and bleed perhaps for some time longer, but without hope. First to wither will be the armed resistance, overcome by vastly superior Soviet-supplied firepower. Then, just as certainly, the unarmed resistance, demoralized and abandoned, will follow, leaving the Sandinistas in total, permanent control of Nicaragua.

What's so bad about that? What, after all, does the resistance hope to achieve? Sandinista defense minister Humberto Ortega explained it well when, in 1981, he denounced former Sandinista junta member Alfonso Robelo as an enemy of the revolution. "The democracy that Robelo asks," charged Ortega, "is . . . that they [the bourgeoisie, presumably] have the army, the power, and that we Sandinistas be what the left is in Costa Rica, a sector, an organization that is free to move about, that publishes its newspaper." In other words, Robelo wants, for Nicaragua, Costa Rican-style democracy, where all political tendencies, including the left, are free to compete for

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(rotating) power. For Humberto Ortega, such a program amounts to political criminality. It is what made the Sandinistas push Robelo out of the junta, crush his party, and drive him to exile and resistance. Robelo is now one of the three leaders of the *contra* political leadership, the United Nicaraguan Opposition, known as UNO.

WHAT IS AT STAKE in this civil war is any hope for a democratic Nicaragua. The end of the *contras* means the end of that hope. And a ban on military aid will likely mean, sooner or later, the end of the *contras*.

One would think that House Democrats, who for years have been urging, pushing, encouraging, threatening, and finally celebrating the return of democracy in the Philippines, would be equally eager to see democracy returned to Nicaragua. But they are not. Why? They put up a case that we find, for an issue of this gravity, stunningly weak.

By what right does the U.S. try to bring democracy to a place where it enforced dictatorship for so long? This is the "because of our tainted history we have no moral standing" argument. It is mystifying. The United States stood by the dictatorship in Haiti for at least three decades. Does that mean that we should therefore have ruled ourselves morally ineligible to assist in the transition to democracy? The United States ruled the Philippines as a colony for nearly five decades, then stood by a dictator for the last two. Does that mean that the United States should have disqualified itself from aiding the restoration of democracy?

Certainly the U.S. has a very blemished history in Nicaragua. It is equally certain that our aims now are different than they were 60, even 20, years ago. As in Guatemala and El Salvador, as in the Philippines and Haiti and other places where our history is stained, in Nicaragua the relevant question is American intentions today, not Teddy Roosevelt's at the time of the building of the Panama Canal.

We have no right to try to impose democracy on another country. After the Philippines and Haiti, and the general self-congratulatory jubilation of liberals and conservatives alike over two triumphs of American diplomacy, this argument stands exposed as a camouflage. Those who advocate dramatic American intervention in pro-American dictatorships should not be suddenly stricken with scrupulousness about the sanctity of sovereignty when intervention is proposed in states ruled by pro-Soviet Leninists.

But one situation involves peaceful change; the other, war. If in Nicaragua transition to democracy were possible without war, we too would oppose any fighting. But that option does not exist. Does anyone believe that the Sandinistas will ever peacefully transfer power or permit a free allocation of power by election?

The contras can't win. This argument is invariably heard from those who vote again and again to cut off aid to the *contras*. Yes, unarmed they can't win. Maybe House Democrats expect Nicaraguan democrats to win by lying down in front of Sandinista tanks, Philippines style.

Can the *contras* win the way the North Vietnamese won in South Vietnam? No, but they can win in the way the Sandinistas won in Managua. They could win not by rolling over the Sandinista army, but by controlling the countryside, which would in turn help undermine what little urban support the Sandinistas have. A Leninist regime with a conscript army on the defensive, losing the countryside and undermined in the city, would ultimately find its situation untenable.

The contras are not democrats but Somocistas. It is true that some top commanders are ex-Guardia. But even the most conservative (and powerful) of the three political leaders, Adolfo Calero, was a longtime opponent of Somoza and jailed for his efforts. The other UNO leader, Arturo Cruz, an impeccable democrat, says the *contras* represent "the revolt of Nicaraguans against oppression by other Nicaraguans." One doesn't raise an army of 15,000 peasants with promises of restoring a universally despised dictatorship.

We should try diplomacy, not force. The United States should be working out with the Sandinistas some kind of diplomatic arrangement under the umbrella of Contadora. This imagined solution to Sandinista regional power and ambitions is a parchment barrier: the Sandinistas are given free rein within their borders, and in return, they promise not to trespass on anyone else's. Certainly we can expect the Sandinistas to adhere initially to such a nonaggression or revolution-with-frontiers agreement. Time enough for the *contras* to wither away and be repatriated in Miami. At which point the Sandinistas will be secure in the knowledge that no future opponents are ever going to risk their lives in a second insurgency, having seen the first one sold out. With a free hand, does anyone imagine that they will adhere to their agreements any more than, say, the Vietnamese adhered to theirs? We have experience with Sandinista parchment. In 1979 they pledged to the Organization of American States to establish an open, democratic, and pluralistic society.

It takes willful blindness to imagine that some kind of paper agreement with the Sandinistas that allows them to consolidate their power will ensure stability in Central America. In fact, the opposite is almost certainly the case. A highly militarized, highly disciplined country with by far the largest army in Central America, with ideological ambitions stretching far beyond its borders, and supported by Cuba and the Soviet Union, is bound to be a source of constant instability in a region of weak and fledgling democracies.

The neighboring countries seem to want a Contadora solution. What does one expect from, say, Costa Rica, a country with no army facing a 50,000-man military across its border? It sees a starved insurgency, an isolationist U.S. Congress, and a rising military power in Managua. Does one expect Costa Rica publicly to come out in support of overthrowing its neighbor, given the odds now that its neighbor will be in power permanently? Of course such countries will make muted public statements. But as many of the leaders of these weak democracies told the Kissinger Commission and others since, they are desperate to see the United States get rid of the Sandinistas for them.

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What is the government of Colombia, one of the original Contadora countries, to say? It publicly denies but privately knows that an assault on its Palace of Justice and the massacre of its Supreme Court was carried out by M-19 guerrillas with weapons of Nicaraguan origin. It knows that Sandinista *comandante* Tomas Borges attended a mass, complete with an M-19 flag draped over the altar, for the guerrillas killed in that raid. The reach of the Sandinistas is impressive. Latin American governments, many of which face left-wing insurgencies, are hardly likely to make themselves more of a target by public calls for the Yankees to save them from communists.

The contra policy is driving the Sandinistas into the hands of the Soviets. It is hard for Americans to believe that some people act out of ideological conviction. Look, therefore, at what the Sandinistas did long before there was a Reagan, long before there were *contras*. In one year the Carter administration gave them in aid the equivalent of half of what Somoza received in 16 years, and during that time they systematically eliminated their democratic allies and aligned themselves with the Soviets.

ON JUNE 23, 1981, Humberto Ortega said to the Sandinista army and militia officers: "We are saying that Marxism-Leninism is the scientific doctrine that guides our revolution, the instrument of analysis of our Vanguard for understanding [the revolution's] historic process and for carrying out the revolution. . . ." He then asserted that the FSLN had made the pact with the moderate opposition only for the purposes of getting rid of Somoza, holding off U.S. intervention, and keeping the economy in place.

It is remarkable that for House Democrats Sandinista ideological commitment requires constant theatrical demonstration. It took Daniel Ortega's flight to Moscow a few days after a *contra* vote last year to dramatize Managua's connection with Moscow. You can be sure that this time Ortega's handlers will take away his American Express card until after the vote. Don't expect to see him visiting New York for eye wear or Moscow for hardware until the coast is clear.

The Cubans and Soviets will match our escalation. This is the counsel of pure defeatism. It cedes to the Soviets the power to set the level of violence and superpower commitment on the North American continent. It is, in effect, to say that the Soviet will to annex Nicaragua exceeds that of the United States to prevent it from happening. The prophecy is, of course, self-fulfilling.

The contras will draw the United States into war. Probably the root argument, certainly the one on which Tip O'Neill hangs his hat. Its origin is the fear of another Vietnam and the isolationist hope that if we only will stay out of this fight no harm will come to us.

But nothing is more likely to force American military intervention than the consolidation of an aggressive, highly militarized, pro-Soviet regime in the area. The *contras* want to do their own fighting. Cut them off, and the only body in the hemisphere able to restrain the Sandinistas will be the U.S. Army. Of course, American military involvement can never be ruled out. But destroying the only indigenous armed opposition to the Nicaraguans hardly seems the way to prevent it.

And what will be more likely to bring about American military involvement? Even Democrats argue that the United States has a vital interest in preventing the establishment of a Soviet base in Nicaragua. Even Democrats would call for American military action in that situation. Walter Mondale, for example, suggested a quarantine. When tried in October 1962, that idea brought us closer to World War III than any other moment in postwar history. A democratic Nicaragua is the only guarantee that the threat will not materialize.

The consolidation of the Sandinistas will lead to a second Cuba on the mainland, or more precisely, to an enlarged first Cuba. As Robelo recalls, during his days in the ruling junta no important decision was ever made without the assent of the Cuban invariably present at the meeting. Even those who think it sentimental for the United States to concern itself with the state of pluralism and democracy in other countries must recognize what a strategic defeat the establishment of a Soviet satellite in Central America would constitute for the United States.

We do not have any illusions about the tragedy that is civil war and the suffering it causes. Guerrilla war is of necessity nasty, brutish, and long. And this peasant army, ill-trained and ill-equipped, is hardly a perfect model for insurgency. But our choice is this model—which could be vastly improved in combat effectiveness and discipline if given sufficient American aid and training—or none.

We believe that preventing the establishment of a Leninist dictatorship in Nicaragua is a goal worthy of American support, and that those willing to fight for this cause are deserving of American assistance. A decision to support one side in a civil war is not one to be taken lightly. We come to it in the full realization that, whatever tragedy it brings, the liquidation of the democratic side of Nicaraguan civil war will bring infinitely more tragedy to Nicaragua, to Central America, and ultimately to the rest of the hemisphere.

NOTEBOOK

□ THE BEST THING the United States could do to help Cory Aquino's new government would be to end our shameful quota on sugar imports, of which the Philippines is our second largest supplier. Instead, the new farm bill squeezes imports further. This quota, begun under President Reagan in 1981, benefits 12,000 domestic sugar growers to the tune of $200,000 each, while costing the average American family about $100 a year in higher food prices. More important, it's a body blow to the economies of the Philippines and other desperate Third World countries.

□ CORRECTION: The Notebook of March 3 erroneously reported that Joseph P. Kennedy III, a candidate for Tip

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O'Neill's congressional seat, made $335,000 a year from his energy companies. This information came from the *Boston Globe* and was confirmed by the *Globe* reporter who prepared the chart that this information came from. In fact, Kennedy's salary is $62,920.58. The larger figure is Kennedy's income over two years from all sources, including family trusts.

The myth of Asian women.

GEISHAS, DRAGON LADIES

WASHINGTON'S SELECT COMMUNITY of largely male Asia experts and foreign policy sages spent most of this winter warning Pollyannas not to expect much from Corazon Aquino. Heads shook in unison when asked whether Mrs. Aquino could pull together the opposition in time to win the sudden elections called by Ferdinand Marcos. "I know Cory," said one man. "She couldn't find her . . . with both hands."

"I'm sorry," said another. "Don't expect anything from her, she doesn't have it in her."

Mrs. Aquino was just a housewife. But Imelda Marcos—ah—the original dragon lady, the villain of the islands, the true bitch, probably a lesbian, the stories. . . . Imelda was the woman with power, not Cory.

These men of Washington—politicians, government types in and out of office, and journalists—they understand how power works. Not since Madame Nhu talked about barbecued monks during the reign of her brother-in-law in Saigon has Washington been so full of received wisdom about that mysterious species called Asian women.

Dragon ladies are so in season again that *People* magazine conferred the title on Michèle Duvalier, Haiti's own lady of misery and luxury. Marked by the highest forms of corruption, the most virulent strains of callousness and cynicism, they are given credit for the worst in dictatorial regimes. They are the grasping power behind the scene. Jewels drip from their claws. Babies die so they can be clad in French fashions. They breathe fire. (The steam goes out their ears.) Their husbands or fathers or brothers-in-law who hold or held power are creatures to be pitied, caught in the grasps of the formidable dragon ladies. Think of Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Ching. Or Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi (who is an example of the rare crossover from housewife to dragon lady).

Then there is Corazon Aquino, properly accused by Imelda Marcos of not wearing makeup. Mrs. Aquino is an incompetent. Without the claws, without the jewels, without the steely glare in her eye, she belongs to that other category of Asian women, the sweet passive creatures who make the best wives and mothers in the world. That is a well-known and documented fact. As one Washington journalist put it: "You don't actually believe that a pacifist housewife is responsible for what happened in the Philippines? It's the Pentagon."

How could anyone expect much from a well-educated daughter of one of the Philippines' more notable families (a family that has produced a number of politicians), from the wife who assisted in her husband's distinguished political career, from a woman who is in fact just a housewife and a mother? She may have won the election, but the military brought her to power and she won't be able to control the military—wait and see. And what about the communist insurgency—not to mention the economy? She just doesn't have the background. At most she's one of those devout Catholic women, a Joan of Arc figure who can inspire a country but can't rule it.

Who knows. If she paints her nails lacquer red, dons regal silks, and starts pilfering from the national treasure, she might have a chance. Or if she throws her enemies into prison, instead of releasing them as she's already done, and then announces some fraudulent campaign like a cultural revolution or a national emergency, she'd show us what she's made of.

Then the Asia experts might respect her and give credit where credit is due. Because they know that Asian women ride to power on the tail of a dragon.

ELIZABETH BECKER

Elizabeth Becker is the author of *When the War Was Over*, a book about Cambodia's revolution, to be published by Simon and Schuster in September.

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

GOING TO THE MAT

CONTRARY to popular impression, the White House did not go all out last year to win congressional approval of military aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*. It pulled its biggest punch: President Reagan. The pragmatists at the White House, then led by senior aide Michael K. Deaver, prevailed over the ideologues, whose spokesman was communications director Patrick J. Buchanan. The argument against full-blown Reagan involvement was that the president shouldn't tie himself too closely to an unpopular cause like *contra* aid. He shouldn't, in other words, try to lead on an issue on which the American people and Congress weren't already behind him. He lobbied a bit, but he didn't go on national television. Military aid to the *contras* was defeated.

The case for presidential timidity got an airing again this year. Richard Wirthlin, the president's pollster, cautioned against a Reagan speech on TV. An aide to Donald T. Regan, the White House chief of staff, insisted that the

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networks wouldn't run another TV address so soon after the president's February 26 speech on defense. A fervent pitch for *contra* aid was deleted from the February 26 speech on the grounds it would muddy the defense spending issue. Still, the Buchanan forces, backed by officials at the National Security Council and State Department, won this time. One reason, an aide says, is that Reagan painfully regrets having done so little last year. An address on national television devoted solely to Nicaragua, its Sandinista government, and the *contras* is now set for Sunday, March 16, a day or two before the critical vote in the House.

Reagan may have been among the last to find out. Asked about the possibility of a TV address on the subject at a private press briefing on February 28, he was vague. "I'm going to do everything I can, whatever the opportunities might be," he said. "We haven't laid out a schedule for them, but I'm going to do everything I can to inform the American people of the situation there [in Nicaragua], and to persuade the Congress of our responsibility to do something about it." Later that day a senior official explained, "The president is going to give a TV speech. He just doesn't know it yet."

The decision to press for military aid, instead of sticking with so-called humanitarian assistance, was made in January at a meeting of the National Security Council. Why go for it in the face of last year's defeat in the House by a margin of 248 to 180? The *contras* are losing the war, and losing it badly. Last June Congress voted $27 million in nonmilitary aid for them—everything but guns and ammo—but that assistance is both insufficient and slow in arriving. The State Department asserts there are 20,000 *contras*. Of these, only about 6,000 are left in Nicaragua. The rest are clustered in camps across the border in Honduras. All are poorly trained, and most are shabbily equipped. Senior officials warn that without military hardware to counter Soviet MI-24 helicopters and other sophisticated weapons used by Sandinista troops, the *contras* will be wiped out as a serious rebel force within months. If that happens, Reagan's policy in Central America, although successful in El Salvador, will be close to a shambles.

THE strategy in seeking military aid is a clever one. It is to keep attention on the Sandinistas, who have a deservedly bad image on Capitol Hill, and not on the *contras* and what weapons and training they may get. Some $70 million has been earmarked for military aid, but it would come out of previously appropriated Defense Department funds. "We didn't want a Gramm-Rudman fight," says a White House official. In fact, the legislation would merely remove two restrictions on assisting the *contras*. One requires that aid must go through the State Department. The other requires that the aid be nonlethal. With these restrictions off, the administration could go beyond sending antiaircraft weapons to the *contras* to deal with Soviet helicopters. It could begin using American military advisers (from the Defense Department) to train *contra* soldiers. For now, though, "we want to avoid public discussion of what happens after the restrictions are removed," an official says.

The administration has also changed its position on renewed negotiations with the Sandinistas. This is designed to defuse the charge by Democrats that the administration—which broke off talks in 1984—hasn't vigorously sought a negotiated settlement in Nicaragua. "The real issue the vote [on *contra* aid] is going to turn on is diplomacy and whether we've given it a chance," says an official. The Sandinistas want negotiations, but only with the United States. The administration wants negotiations too, but only between the *contras* and the Sandinistas. Before it gets involved again in talks, the administration declared, the *contra*-Sandinista talks must have started and be making real progress. That, at least, was the administration's old position.

The administration's new position is that it is willing to open talks with the Sandinistas at the same time that negotiations with the *contras* start. The Sandinistas have rejected this scheme, since they refuse to recognize the *contras* as a legitimate force. But the administration's purpose is served: the Sandinistas are shown to be an impediment to talks. And if dubious members of Congress want further "assurances we are willing to negotiate, they'll get them," says Elliott Abrams, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs.

THE administration's campaign on behalf of military aid started in mid-February, when the strategy group run by Donald Fortier, the deputy national security adviser, began daily meetings at noon. Soon the "208 Group," named after the Executive Office Building room in which it meets, was also gathering daily to plot media tactics. Two or three times a week, a dozen or more members of Congress are brought to the White House for briefings. Reagan makes a personal appeal, and the senators and representatives are presented a re-creation of the NSC session in January at which it was decided to seek military aid. "They get the intelligence information and hear the political arguments," an official says.

One piece of intelligence proved to be an embarrassment. This is what officials say is a Sandinista document outlining plans for elaborate lobbying of Congress against military aid. Press secretary Larry Speakes disclosed the existence of the document—he wasn't supposed to, State Department officials now say—and the White House promised to release an expurgated version publicly. But once the names of organizations and individuals that allegedly were going to help the Sandinistas were excised (to protect intelligence "sources and methods," it was claimed) the document lost its punch. So the decision to release it was reversed. "We looked worse than silly," an official concedes.

In framing the issue, the White House wants to give Congress the unmistakable impression that it will be blamed if the *contra* resistance collapses. "It's going to come down to a question of whether the Democrats believe the president or want to take a gamble on having the freedom fighters gone and dealing with what happens next in Central America," says a White House official. "We had a

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presidential Bay of Pigs [in 1961]. The question now is whether we have a congressional Bay of Pigs."

Reagan isn't that blunt, but he isn't mincing words either. Unless the *contras* get military aid, he says, Nicaragua will destabilize all of Central America and "create what communism always creates—a huge refugee machine." The Sandinistas, Reagan says, got a "second wind" when Congress barred any aid to the *contras* for a year in 1984-85. But the Sandinistas "cannot withstand very much more pressure" from the *contras* now, given the weak Nicaraguan economy. With more pressure, they'll negotiate a peaceful settlement, he says.

Winning the aid vote in Congress may not be all that difficult. Republicans control the Senate and are likely to go along with Reagan. In the House the goal is to hold 170 of the 182 Republicans and lure 48 Democrats. In 1985 Reagan got a minimum of 40 Democrats on every *contra* vote. Forty voted for military aid, 46 for nonlethal aid, and 73 for humanitarian aid with strings tied to it. The problem is Republicans. Only 140 House Republicans supported military aid last year. Republican moderates drift when there isn't a penalty for going against the White House. When Reagan didn't deliver a TV speech last year, the moderates knew they were free to drift. This year they aren't. If any of them doubt this, they've only to watch prime-time television on March 16.

FRED BARNES

Profits and loss of life.

NASA's Mid-Life Crisis

THEY WERE SIMILAR, white men in their early 50s who had spent their entire careers with NASA or the aerospace firms that supply it. Most joined directly after college or military service and played active roles in the spectacular success of America's manned space program. Last week, in rancorous and often contradictory testimony before the presidential panel investigating the space shuttle disaster, they shocked panel members and much of the country with ample proof of the deterioration of NASA's ability to manage manned space flight and ensure the safety of those who fly.

At this point, more than a month after the Challenger exploded, the investigation has revealed no "smoking gun," no single mistake by a workman or a manager that caused the accident. It is unlikely that such a conclusion will ever be reached, but so much has already been found to be wrong that it is appropriate to ask how things got so bad, seemingly so quickly.

Several of those who testified have received anonymous threats on their lives. A few have had to move with their families away from their homes. Some have begun psychotherapy to try to cope with their anguish and feelings of guilt. This is not the old NASA—workplace of the magicians of technology who seemed never to fail.

"At the beginning all the decisions were made at the lowest possible level. We worked together toward one goal. It was simply inconceivable that one person could have thought something was wrong—particularly if it was dangerous—and everyone else not know about it." This is how one engineer who joined NASA in 1960 to work on Mercury and continued through the shuttle program recalls the management structure of the early days. By many accounts that style continued through Gemini and Apollo days, and it produced results that were nothing short of spectacular. Even when the mechanical systems failed, as they did during the Apollo 13 mission, the engineering brilliance triumphed.

THE TESTIMONY last week revealed how much the system had changed. Photographs of the 73-second flight of the Challenger show that the explosion was set off by a leak at a seam on one of the shuttle's rockets. No one yet knows what caused the leak. The answer may never be found, but we do know that as early as 1982 that seam was recognized as a problem, the failure of which could cause "loss of mission, vehicle, and crew," according to a NASA report. We know that after several shuttle flights, inspection of that seam showed that it was eroding, almost leaking. Last July an engineer for the Morton Thiokol Corporation, the rocket's manufacturer, wrote a memo to his superiors that the problem with the seals had become "a number one priority," and that a failure with the seals "would be a catastrophe of the highest order—loss of human life." The response of NASA management to all this was less than urgent. The manufacturer was asked to suggest some improvements in the seal design. One was selected and was about to be tested, but flights continued.

And there were the events the day before launch, when a group of engineers at Morton Thiokol learned how cold it was at Cape Canaveral and worried that the cold could make the seals even less dependable. They prevailed upon their management to ask NASA to delay the launch. NASA officials, clearly unhappy, asked the company to reconsider. The management reconsidered by simply overruling the concerned engineers. At that point, the engineers—from a quiet section of Mormon northern Utah, where much of the economy depends on the Morton Thiokol Company—kept their fears and their disappointment to themselves. Many of the people involved in those discussions thought that the long-standing NASA procedures for resolving safety questions had suddenly changed. Previously the company had to justify its confidence that its hardware was safe to fly. Now it had to justify fears that it was unsafe. NASA officials seemed almost desperate to get the launch off.

It is important that many of these decisions were made by men who were with NASA from the early days. Indeed, one problem may be a lack of new talent in the agency. The $25 billion spent to put men on the moon created a lot of

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jobs, and many of those who were allowed to stay hung on. The average age of NASA engineers has been going up about nine-tenths of a year every year. In other words, the same people are still there. But the shuttle program does not require the same level of active development as the earlier efforts. So NASA has created thickening layers of bureaucracy. The result, as one engineer put it, "is that people making the decisions are getting farther and farther away from the people who get their hands dirty."

In the controversy over the effects of the cold weather on the seals, the men who understood the seals best—the engineers at Morton Thiokol—were the ones who were scared. They did not have a detailed and complete set of engineering data to justify that concern. As Roger Boisjoly, one of the engineers, testified, they only felt that the cold weather "was moving us in the direction away from goodness." When the NASA managers from the Marshall Space Flight Center heard of the concern, they dismissed it. It did

THE PRESS

SHUTTLE JOKES

A LOS ANGELES radio station fired an announcer for wisecracking on the air that the Challenger blew up because the crew was freebasing Tang. There are a score of sacrilegious Challenger jokes, many of which seemed to originate in the capital and then spread, thanks to free government WATS lines, across the country. How many astronauts can you get in a Volkswagen? Eleven: two in the back seat, two in the front, and seven in the ashtray. What did the bumper sticker say on the piece of salvaged Challenger fuselage? "If you can read this, thank a teacher."

A little routine goes with telling a new Challenger joke. You make the listener complicitous by asking if he wants to hear the latest NASA funny, in the same tones you might use to ask a noninitiate if he'd care to sniff up a line of cocaine. The listener doesn't say yes or no, but is careful, as soon as the joke is told, to make a sour face and exclaim, "Tasteless!" So it's O.K.

A similar drill goes on in Moscow and the capitals of the other Iron Curtain countries, where you have the dullest press and the sharpest political humor. Wherever propaganda reigns and heterodoxy is taboo, the back alleys teem with frightful witticisms and appallingly entertaining parody.

In America, within minutes of Christa McAuliffe's death, the mass media began moving past the work-a-day idiocies of pack journalism. They left behind ordinary news bathos, and took up their role as the voice of the unitary society. As Rather, Jennings, and Brokaw sat in their anchor seats and fingered their space phalluses—those stand-tall model reproductions of the Good Ship Challenger—whatever skepticism they may have once brought to their work vanished. They pledged to carry on "the mission" of the seven heroes, now gone to the red, white, and blue Valhalla where America's freedom fighters from Bunker Hill to Cape Canaveral sleep in glory.

No hyperbole was too overblown. For the rest of their lives, we were told, Americans would remember what they were doing when they heard the news of the explosion, as they remembered the day President Kennedy was assassinated or Pearl Harbor was bombed. Network program bookers searched through their Rolodex gang files to find the crackpottiest shrink-ologists to give on-air instructions for saving the nation's schoolchildren, who were declared to be traumatized by the death of "their teacher" unto the very edge of permanent personality disorder. In print and across the airwaves, Monovox, the voice of official thought and prescribed emotion, coached the population to strike the correct pose of conformity as America dedicated, pledged, consecrated, and devoted itself to going on, as the dead heroes and their families wished, to be first in our solar system and then in our galaxy. From every orifice of communication it was repeated that we, living vicariously through the NASA bureaucracy, were scientists, adventurers, space conquerors.

But Americans now react with the same samizdat humor as Russians do when faced with a party-line press. Just as in Moscow, the people passing along these jokes may or may not agree with the official line. Many of those who've been going around explaining that NASA stands for Need Another Seven Astronauts actually favor the space program and want to see it continue.

Some, of course, are counterattacking with humor since their own opinions find no expression in a mass-media forum. But most are reacting to the monotony of propaganda and to the exaggeration, the repetition, and the overemphasis of hollow formalities that propaganda can't avoid. There are nights on television news when there are so many wreath-layings, prize awardings, and memorial services for the patriotic dead, not to mention official statements by Cabinet members, you'd think you were watching Rumanian television—if socialism in Bucharest has advanced to that stage of boredom.

In the midst of unending solemnities and taboo topics, the imp in more imaginative people takes over. Hence the blurting of the Washington, D.C., drive-time disc jockey who couldn't refrain from joking during the days of high hypocrisy around Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday that if somebody would shoot four more, the country could have an entire week off. During the *Achille Lauro* ship-napping, the joke around Washington was that PLO stood for Push Leon (Klinghoffer) Over. The jokesters were neither racists nor pro-PLO, but their imps had whispered to them, "Enough already." The hermit monks of yore, immured in their belief in the sinfulness of impure thoughts, were tortured by phantasmagoric, naked dancing girls. We have NASA jokes.

Monovox is taking over American newsrooms. Time was when independence of judgment was laid aside only when the nation went to war. Now the penguin parade of journalists forms at the drop of a rocket or the fall of a minor equatorial despot. The adversarial relationship—which as recently as 15 years ago reporters said was the natural one between them and the White House—has evaporated. Today they are routinely mobilized by a president as easily as an aircraft carrier flotilla is ordered to make a threatening demonstration off the coast of Mauritius.

NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN

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not fit into any preset bureaucratic parameters. There was no rule that a launch could not take place below a certain temperature. So they asked the company to reconsider. It is difficult to imagine that the fear would not have been communicated if there could have been an engineer-to-engineer conversation,

The relationship between NASA and the contractor, Morton Thiokol, was also a problem. In the Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs, NASA chose its contractors not by competitive bidding, but by NASA's judgment of which company could best do the job. A company held on to the contract as long as it performed its assigned task. In the shuttle program the rules are different. Indeed, in a few weeks Morton Thiokol stood the chance of losing part of its multimillion dollar rocket contract simply because other companies had been asked to submit bids. The NASA officials testified they did not believe that economic considerations influenced the company. Such statements are naive at best. It was unforgivable for Morton Thiokol managers to overrule their engineers when the engineers were expressing deeply felt safety fears. But it was also inexcusable for the NASA officials not to understand the power they held because of the new economics of manned space when they asked Morton Thiokol to reconsider its recommendation not to launch.

Those men who arrived as young engineers at Cape Canaveral or the Marshall Space Flight Center in Alabama are now running a program that is quite different from Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo. Those missions were ends in themselves. The only goal was to accomplish them safely. In most cases money was not an object. In the space shuttle program, money is sometimes the only object.

At this writing James Fletcher appears to be the leading candidate to take over as head of NASA. When Fletcher held that job before, he oversaw development of plans for the shuttle. In 1972 Fletcher declared that with the shuttle "by the end of this decade the nation will have the means of getting men and equipment to and from space routinely, on a moment's notice, if necessary, and at a small fraction of today's cost."

NONE OF THAT, of course, has come true and it is not likely to for some time. But ever since the shuttle was first conceived, it has been in a losing battle to fulfill those expectations. It does not explore new territory. John Glenn flew at approximately the same altitude and speed in 1962. What the shuttle is supposed to do is make space travel relatively simple and pay for itself. One of the main requirements for that is that it fly frequently. At the time of Fletcher's statement, NASA was predicting 60 flights a year. At the beginning of this year, the prediction had been scaled down to 24 a year by 1990. In 1984 there were four flights. Last year there were nine. Fifteen were scheduled for this year, and many in NASA were worried that they could not keep up with that pace.

At the time of 51L, the last flight of Challenger, the pressure was particularly intense to get the launch off on time. The last mission had been delayed almost a month because of a set of small problems. Challenger was due to carry a scientific satellite into orbit in May and needed to be refurbished for that mission. If the flight did not get off within a few days, the entire schedule would have slipped yet again. In addition, the communications satellite on board was three years late in launching. NASA and particularly the Air Force needed it for a number of future missions as quickly as possible.

At the hearings before the presidential panel, Lawrence Mulloy, one of the NASA officials who asked Morton Thiokol to reconsider, testified that "no extraneous considerations such as schedule came into that decision process." Another NASA official was later heard to remark that "if Larry didn't feel the pressure to get 51L off soon, he was about the only one in NASA who didn't."

Even though there were 24 successful shuttle flights, space travel had not become simple by January 28. There are other systems on board that have been as troublesome and are as potentially dangerous as the seals on the rocket boosters. Nozzles in the main engines and brakes are two prominent examples. Nor has space travel become routine, and putting schoolteachers and Saudi princes on board does not make it so.

The investigation so far has revealed that the attitudes and structure of NASA management must be examined closely. But the biggest mistake would be to blame the tragedy on a few individuals. The problem goes much deeper. In a few years NASA has been transformed from an idealistic goal-oriented group of people to an organization intended to service its customers and try to turn a profit. Its biggest customer is the Defense Department, particularly as the Star Wars program grows. Is this what Americans want from the manned space program? Perhaps this is the time to find out.

ROBERT BAZELL

Robert Bazell is the science correspondent for NBC News.

Unexpected lessons from Manila.

WHERE WE WENT WRONG

THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION'S decision to withdraw its support from Ferdinand E. Marcos has been almost universally heralded. At home the praise has been effusive and bipartisan. In the archipelago, Filipinos celebrating in the streets wrapped themselves in the American flag. But it wasn't long before the enduring problems in the Philippines resurfaced: the eviscerated economy, the communist-led insurgency, the corrupted democratic institutions, and so on. The current euphoria should not obscure America's partial responsibility for the rubble. Looking back on 20 years of U.S. policy in

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the Philippines, we might learn five lessons.

(1) *Listen to career foreign service officers at the mid and even lower levels.* When Marcos declared martial law in 1972, foreign service officers in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research were virtually the only U.S. officials to voice any concern. In a secret memorandum for Secretary of State William Rogers, they expressed prescient "skepticism" about Marcos's commitment to reform, and concluded: "By one means or another, Marcos clearly intends to control Philippine politics for many more years." Their advice was ignored. The National Security Council, the White House, and the Pentagon embraced Marcos.

During the Carter administration, some foreign service officers in Manila and the human rights bureau at the State Department believed that the administration ought to press Marcos to lift martial law. But Carter did little, in large part because the Pentagon didn't want any talk about human rights to interfere with negotiations about the leasing of American military bases.

The Reagan administration moved even closer to Marcos, honoring him in 1982 with his first state visit to Washington in 16 years. This policy began to change only toward the end of Reagan's first term, when mid-level embassy officers began insisting that there would be no reform as long as Marcos was in power. It was also an embassy officer who alerted Washington in the summer of 1984 to the growing threat posed by the New People's Army. But these views were largely ignored by senior policymakers until they finally began to realize that Marcos was losing control of the country. In the final days it was an insistent Secretary of State George Shultz, articulating the views of the foreign service officers, who persuaded the president that the United States could no longer abide Marcos.

(2) *Think long term.* America's short-term interest in warm relations with the incumbent government was served when Nixon acquiesced in Marcos's declaration of martial law, when Carter said little about Marcos's dictatorial ways, and when Reagan assiduously courted Marcos. But the growth of the NPA indicates the damage to our long-term interest in stability and democracy. When Marcos declared martial law, there were barely enough NPA guerrillas to knock off a bank. Today there are some 15,000 well-armed, well-trained guerrillas, and they enjoy widespread support.

(3) *Remember the opposition.* When Reagan declared, during a 1984 presidential campaign debate, that the communists were the only alternative to Marcos, he spoke a grain of truth. There were very few democratically inclined politicians of any stature to replace Marcos. Their ranks had been thinned by more than a decade of dictatorial rule. The United States contributed to the shortage of democratic politicians by doing little to nurture them. During Carter's first year in office, contacts with the democratic opposition did increase. But after Vice President Walter Mondale visited the Marcoses in May 1979, American officials in the Philippines sharply curtailed their meetings with critics of Marcos.

The best example of the United States's coolness toward Filipino democrats was its treatment of Benigno Aquino Jr. Aquino is now regarded as a democratic martyr in the United States. Yet while he was alive, he received little attention or respect from the American government. When Marcos threw Aquino in jail in 1972, there was no official Washington protest. In 1975 a retired foreign service officer, Paul Kattenburg (whose career had suffered when he had spoken against the Vietnam War), sought to act as an intermediary in securing Aquino's release. He was unsuccessful. When Aquino was released from prison in 1980, the Carter administration did help arrange for him to come to the United States. But when Aquino was invited in December 1980 to appear at the State Department's Open Forum (designed to expose foreign service officers to alternative policy views), top State Department officials objected. They feared, correctly, that his presence would anger the Marcoses and would make the incoming administration's relations with the Philippine government more difficult. Aquino was ultimately allowed to speak, but only to a restricted audience.

A corollary to this lesson is to learn to distinguish between nationalists and communists. The United States ignored Aquino and accepted Marcos's seizure of power in 1972 in part because they viewed Aquino and other opposition politicians as strident nationalists. They were, but they were not therefore anti-American or pro-communist, as Washington assumed. There is not just a moral imperative behind this lesson. There is also a very practical one: the opposition might someday become the government. The goodwill that President Aquino and her Cabinet show toward the United States may well depend on how willing they are to forgive the treatment they received when they were on the outs.

(4) *Don't meddle in another country's domestic politics.* To some, the toppling of Marcos proves the opposite: that we should meddle. Yet our meddling in the Philippines did not begin last month or last year, but several decades ago, and it did not serve us well. In the 1950s and 1960s the CIA doled out hundreds of thousands of dollars to candidates, raised even more funds from American businesses, wrote candidates' speeches, set up organizations to support them, and orchestrated press coverage. According to intelligence sources, the CIA assisted a presidential candidate named Diosdado Macapagal in 1961. Macapagal won, but when he ran for reelection in 1965, Philippine military and intelligence officials who worked with the CIA asked the agency not to help him. It is not clear whether the United States then helped his rival, an ambitious young senator named Ferdinand Marcos. In any case, Marcos was elected in 1965, and by the time he declared martial law, he knew he could count on the support of the United States.

This kind of interference has tended to do us little good in the long run. We helped depose President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam in 1963, only to find ourselves with Nguyen Cao Ky and Nguyen Van Thieu. We helped oust Salvador Allende in Chile, and got Augusto Pinochet. We clandestinely helped elect Forbes Burnham in Guyana

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in 1964, then watched him move closer to the Soviet Union. We plotted the overthrow and assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961, turning Zaire over to Mobutu Sese Seko, whose only rival in ostentatious corruption is Imelda Marcos.

It's disingenuous to counter that our granting or withholding of economic or military assistance always affects domestic politics, that we are always meddling to some degree. The principle of nonintervention doesn't rule out normal relations or aid. But it does mean that we don't clandestinely involve ourselves in elections, and that we don't go around trying to overthrow governments—of whatever political orientation. Reagan's call for Marcos's resignation, though perhaps justified by our long support for the dictator, went too far. Reagan should have said only that the U.S. wouldn't supply military or economic aid to a Marcos government. The rest was up to the Filipinos.

(5) *Banish the fear of being charged with being soft on communism.* This lesson is primarily for Democrats. What the Reagan administration finally did two weeks ago, the Carter administration could have done eight years ago. The problem was its excessive fear that by speaking out against Marcos in the Philippines it would be criticized by conservatives in the United States for somehow playing into communist hands. The triumph of Corazon Aquino has proved how foolish that fear was.

RAYMOND BONNER

Raymond Bonner is working on a book about the U.S. relations with the Marcos government, to be published by Times Books.

Is Egypt next?

THE TERRIBLE TIDE

BY HIRSH GOODMAN

THEY LINE THE STREETS, stationed about 100 feet apart, the blank look of illiteracy on their faces. The members of Egypt's 120,000-man Central Security Police, clad in black uniforms with cumbersome leather straps crisscrossing their breasts, are mainly conscripted peasants who have been rejected by other branches of the armed services. They perform the mindless task of guarding bridges, hospitals, embassies, airports, stations, hotels, government offices—anything that could be a target of attack—simply by forming a human chain around the objective.

Armed with World War II rifles and 30-year-old submachine guns, they stand motionless for 12-hour shifts, with only one half-hour break for a plate of *phoul* (beans) slopped up from a communal bucket. As they stand guard, they watch Egypt's ostentatious privileged classes pass through the revolving doors of the luxury hotels and night spots in which a single meal would cost them five months' pay. At the end of their stint, most return to miserable compounds. It was at one of these police camps in the suburb of Giza where last month's rioting broke out.

The rumor that the government was intending to extend its military service by a year was enough to ignite the spark of *intifada* (revolt) in the ranks of this peasant army. The rumor spread rapidly, and with it an outpouring of anger and frustration that rippled through the ranks of the security police. Within 48 hours, 36 people (most of them rioting policemen) had been killed and 321 others were injured. Four hotels, 28 nightclubs, and 58 limousines were left gutted by groups of frenzied policemen evoking the name of Allah as they directed their hatred against the very objects they had been called into national service to protect.

President Hosni Mubarak acted swiftly. He immediately dispatched specialized commando units to subdue the camps, clamped down a 20-hour curfew on Cairo and its environs, and deployed the army in massive force to ensure that the riots did not spread beyond Giza's tourist district (the pyramids are nearby) and the security police camps near the international airport and the affluent suburb of Heliopolis. Mubarak simultaneously called in the leaders of the opposition and warned them not to fan the flames. He then fired the interior minister, who directed the Central Security Police, and nine generals. He appointed trusted aides in the generals' places and assigned military officers to command units of the security police. Approximately 3,000 rioters were arrested, some reportedly carrying 50 crisp bank notes in their pockets, which led the authorities to speculate that the uprising had not been entirely spontaneous. By the first week of March it was clear that Mubarak had survived the crisis. At the same

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time it was just as clear that the current uprising was not an isolated event, but another portent of fundamental change in Egypt.

This is not new. I visited the country in October last year, after the *Achille Lauro* affair and after Cairo's universities and mosques had been rocked by weeks of violent protest. More rioting followed in January after the death in an Israeli jail of Sulayman Khatir, the soldier who killed seven Israelis at a beach in Sinai last October. (See "The Ras Burqa Affair," below.) Egypt seemed confused about its relations with the United States and with the Palestine Liberation Organization. The intelligentsia were preoccupied not with the consequences of peace with Israel, as they were five years ago, but with the threat to Egyptian society of fundamentalism and radicalism. A judge on the Cairo Supreme Court expressed concern about the increasing number of decisions based on Islamic law, rather than French-Egyptian law, being handed down by his colleagues on the

The Ras Burqa Affair

On October 5, 1985, in a place called Ras Burqa in Sinai, a mentally disturbed Egyptian named Sulayman Khatir, a member of the paramilitary Central Security Force, machine-gunned a group of Israeli campers who were sliding down a sand dune. Five children managed to escape. The remaining seven people—four children and three adults—were killed or badly wounded. According to Israeli eyewitnesses, other Egyptian members of the security force who were stationed nearby gave no help to the wounded. An Israeli doctor and other vacationers going to help them were stopped at gunpoint. Those who were not already dead were left to bleed to death.

Demented gunmen may run amok in any part of the world, and Khatir stated during his initial interrogation that he did not know the nationality of the people he had shot. He said that they had not offended or provoked him. His only reason for shooting was that they had trespassed on a prohibited area. Even the failure to succor the wounded may perhaps be attributed to uncertainty and disarray.

Far more ominous was the response of the Egyptian opposition press, which was echoed in other Arab countries. In no time at all, Sulayman Khatir was being celebrated as a national hero, and mass demonstrations were held in his support. Eventually he himself came to accept the role that had been thrust upon him. The age and sex of the victims were routinely suppressed. (Three of the four children killed were girls; two of the three adults were women.) All kinds of mutually contradictory fantasies were developed—that the victims were spies caught photographing secret installations (in a demilitarized zone), that they had spat upon and torn up an Egyptian flag, that half-naked Israeli women had offended Sulayman Khatir's Moslem conscience, and even that they had attacked him, forcing him to fire in self-defense. These stories remained uncontradicted in the pro-government media, which for many weeks withheld the facts from readers and viewers.

As the celebration of Sulayman Khatir built up, many leading Egyptian intellectuals, of both the leftist and religious oppositions, joined in acclaiming him and his deed. According to the well-known Marxist politician and writer Khalid Muhyi'l-Din, the trial of Khatir was a trial of Egyptian and Arab public opinion. The Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brethren, Umar al-Tilmisani, observed that "if every Muslim would do what Sulayman did, Israel would no longer exist"—apparently a call to solve the Middle East problem by genocide.

Most commentators indignantly rejected the official statement that Khatir was mad. Lufti al-Khawli, a Marxist writer and editor, regarded the statement as an insult to the Egyptian nation. Farid Abd al-Karim, one of the leaders of the Nasserist Arab Socialist Party, acclaimed him as "the conscience of this nation," who with his bullets had "washed away the shame of silence" surrounding the Camp David accords. Muhammad Ibrahim Kamil, a former minister of foreign affairs, said that Khatir's action expressed the anger of every Egyptian and every Arab after the Israeli aggression in Tunis. Ali Hillal Dessouki, a professor of political science at the University of Cairo, addressing the soldier as "my brother," expressed his astonishment at an age in which such men as Khatir are accused of madness, and his sadness for the so-called "sane." Nur al-Sharif, an actor, told Khatir that "you are the sanest among us, for you did what we all want." Ahmad Nasir, of the Egyptian Bar Council, believed that history would always honor Sulayman Khatir as "a living model of a noble Egyptian who refused to be led astray by the treaties of betrayal and surrender."

This extraordinary cult of Sulayman Khatir reached its peak by the end of the year, when he was tried before a military court. The resulting demonstrations were seen by the government, with some reason, as a threat to itself. For the first time the pro-government press published the real story of what had happened at Ras Burqa. Some writers in the Egyptian press even conceded that the pro-government media had been at fault in not publishing the truth and thus giving free scope to the purveyors of lies. And they expressed their horror at a state of mind that made a national hero of a killer of women and children and that called on others to follow his example.

Makram Muhammad Ahmad, the editor of *Al-Musawwar*, a mass-circulation weekly, examined the whole episode in a striking article published last December. Citing the official transcript of the accused soldier's interrogation, he castigated the opposition press for their dishonest and irresponsible handling of the story. He expressed his belief that if the boot had been on the other foot and an Israeli soldier had killed Egyptian women and children, no one in Israel, not even the most fanatical extremists, would have attributed his action to a patriotic hatred of Israel's enemies and commended him for it.

Bernard Lewis

Bernard Lewis is professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton. This is an excerpt from his book *Semites & Anti-Semites: An Enquiry Into Conflict and Prejudice*, © 1986 Bernard Lewis. Reprinted with permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

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bench. The honorable judge (who was a close adviser to the late president Anwar Sadat) turned up his radio to full volume in case the room was bugged, and whispered that he did not know how long Mubarak could survive.

"As the hungry get hungrier, as the privileged are perceived as becoming more corrupt; as political solutions become less feasible," he said, "the masses are going to turn to Allah for salvation, and you remember who killed Sadat."

He spoke of how Mubarak had lost his battle to introduce family planning to the religious factions. Everyone knows that unless Egypt can control its population explosion no economic recovery can be expected. Egypt's current population of 48 million, half of whom are under the age of 15, is growing by 1.5 million per year and is expected to reach 100 million by 2010. "Already this year we are going to have to import 70 percent of our food. Just to maintain a 25 percent literacy rate we have to build schoolrooms for 1.5 million children a year," he said.

MUBARAK faces a host of other problems. Oil prices are dropping. The expulsion of hundreds of thousands of the estimated 2.5 million Egyptians working in the Gulf states, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Libya has increased domestic unemployment and reduced foreign exchange. Tourism has drastically declined since the *Achille Lauro* affair and the hijacking of an Egyptian aircraft to its disastrous end in Malta last year. Credit from European banks for development projects is drying up, and loan payments on everything from Egypt's refurbished army to Cairo's modern telephone system are coming due.

"In 1986 not only will Egypt's net repayment of loans to the U.S. be equal to the entire American aid package," an editor on the semi-official *Al Ahram* newspaper lamented, "but this year we also have to start on the repayment of loans to the Soviets following the end of a 12-year moratorium that was granted after the 1973 Yom Kippur War." Exactly how much is owed to the USSR is unclear, but there is no doubt that Egypt is on the precipice of economic disaster.

Some 95 percent of the population continues to live on less than five percent of the land. Cairo today has a population of 14 million and an infrastructure for three million. Testimony to the misery that this has caused is omnipresent. Hundreds of thousands live in the City of the Dead, having turned family tombs into homes for the living. The municipal garbage dump adjacent to the Al Azhar Islamic Hospital has become the home and feeding ground for thousands more. The tens of thousands of students finishing university each year have no jobs. The bureaucracy and the army, both kept inordinately large to absorb the unemployed, are already overextended. At least 9,000 employees were put out of work as a result of last month's riots alone. Government-initiated projects to create labor have come to a standstill due to lack of funds.

"Don't be deceived by what we see from here," said a former minister in Sadat's government, pointing to Cairo's skyline from the 14th-floor balcony of the Nile Hilton. "This is a city of ice atop a volcano of malcontent. It will be consumed like this," he said, snapping his fingers, "when the bubble bursts."

ISLAMIC fundamentalist and Marxist opposition parties have been doing their best to burst the bubble as quickly as possible. There is no proof that they placed the Egyptian pound notes in the pockets of the leaders of the police rebellion, but they may have been behind the rumor campaign that led to the rampage. Their daily press is filled with vindictive statements against the heathen West, the peace process with Zionist-Imperialist Israel, capitalist bloodsuckers, and Arab lackeys who have forsaken their God and their people for foreign values. These well-financed publications were instrumental in generating the student riots and the volatile protests over the Ras Burqa affair.

Mubarak granted considerable freedom of expression when he took over following Sadat's assassination in 1981. But the former air force commander and Sadat's lackluster deputy premier has inexorably been drawn into the same dilemma that faced the shah of Iran: how to confront an opposition determined to abuse even the limited benefits of democracy in order to end democracy. Mubarak's choice is to clamp down without mercy, or be deposed without mercy. He has thus far refrained from fundamental repression, but few doubt that his threats made after the security police uprising are real. "The president has finally realized the alternatives for Egypt are order or anarchy. There is no middle ground," said a former air force general who served with Mubarak.

On the international scene, Egypt is watching with increased trepidation the process of ostensible rapprochement between Jordan and Syria, and the simultaneous breakdown in the Jordan-Israel peace process. There is a limit to how long Mubarak can remain the only Arab leader at peace with Israel. Economic realities may force him to pursue financing from the Arab world, and freezing the peace process may be the price he has to pay to placate fundamentalist demands. The Islamization of Sudan, the threat of war from Libya, and the latest Iranian offensive against Iraq further isolate Egypt in the Arab world. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union is applying pressure to trade debt for better relations with Moscow and the United States and Western Europe are pushing to keep Egypt securely in the Western alliance.

"Egypt of 1986 is not Egypt of the mid-1970s, and Mubarak is not Sadat," a senior Egyptian official said. Citing Israel's bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, the war in Lebanon, and the bombing of PLO headquarters in Tunis, the official says that Egypt's economic and geostrategic situation has deteriorated. "The Americans embarrassed us by intercepting our airliner after the *Achille Lauro* hijacking and by calling our president a liar," he said. "The Americans have not been sensitive to the fact that in order for Egypt to be a reliable, stable ally, Egypt first and foremost has to solidify its position as leader of the Arab world. Not become isolated from it."

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Pessimism and confusion are growing. Liberal students feel stifled and threatened by the growing fundamentalism and radicalism of their peers. Professionals are concerned by Mubarak's concessions to the religious factions on family planning. Bureaucrats find themselves increasingly unable to keep up with the cost of living in the cities. Many have lost their loyalty to the government. As one businessman said, "We each have our own reasons to fear the future, and our own scapegoats on whom to blame our failures. All I know is that five years ago there was a lot of money in the pocket and no goods on the shelves. Today, there are a lot of goods on the shelves, but no money in the pocket." He and other prudent members of his class, prompted by the prognosis that things can only get a lot worse before they will get better, are making discreet moves to transfer their assets and families to safer shores, depriving Egypt of both brains and resources.

"I feel a great and terrible tide will take us over," the Cairo judge told me above the noise of his radio. "It will take a man of incredible leadership qualities to stop this tide, and Mubarak does not have them. At present he has the loyalty of the armed forces and that keeps him in power. But how long can one govern by the bayonet?" This most recent chapter of *intifada* will not be the last Mubarak will have to face. All the basic factors for renewed disturbances are in place. How long Mubarak can manage the forces around him is a question being asked by many, especially the Israelis to whom continued—albeit cold—peace with Egypt is vital, and the Americans who have plowed billions of dollars into modernizing and Westernizing Egypt's armed forces in the hope of cementing the Camp David treaty. Officials in Jerusalem and Washington bite their fingernails as they tell you that Mubarak has things under control. The armed forces are solidly behind him, they tell you. And we reply: How long do you think he can continue to rule by the bayonet?

Dan Rostenkowski's new look.

OVERNIGHT STATESMAN

BY JACOB WEISBERG

DAN ROSTENKOWSKI became a statesman overnight. The night was May 28, 1985, when he went on TV to respond to President Reagan's tax-reform message. The 57-year-old Ways and Means Committee chairman had substituted a conservative suit and contact lenses for his usual golf wear and glasses. He read from a teleprompter with perfect ease. The blustery wheeler-dealer from Chicago's Northwest side sounded sincere, principled, even eloquent.

Makeovers like Rostenkowski's don't happen by themselves. His low-key retort to the president, written by Ways and Means spokesman John Sherman and subsequently known as the "Write Rosty" speech, stressed the idea that tax fairness was a Democratic idea, not a Republican one. Sherman had Rosty pitch that message to the ethnic constituency that the Democratic Party is supposed to be losing—"working families" and "guys I grew up with [who] now live in the suburbs." Media consultant Joe Rothstein fine-tuned the folksiness of the five-minute statement, and advised Rostenkowski on makeup and clothes. He also taught him how to read a teleprompter and look relaxed.

Rostenkowski, previously unknown to most of his 40 million viewers and known to the remainder only as a Daley machine ward heeler, suddenly developed a national image as a likable tough guy who would stand up to powerful business interests to ensure a fair deal for taxpayers. Rosty used the public support brilliantly to maneuver a bill few thought stood a chance of passage through the Ways and Means Committee and the full House. Some even think the performance puts Rostenkowski in a position to challenge Majority Leader Jim Wright for the speakership in 1987. The new look, however, is misleading.

The words people use to describe Dan Rostenkowski all rhyme. They are rough, tough, and gruff. At six feet two inches and 230 pounds, he seems to embody a threat. As Leo Magrini, the treasurer of Rostenkowski's campaign committee, puts it, "You don't cross him. He could tear you apart pretty good." Once, a summer intern told him a Polish joke. Rostenkowski picked him up and threw him out of the office. "Everyone thought he was going to kill the kid," a staffer recalled. One of Rosty's favorite metaphors for the art of political negotiation is "kicking people's brains out."

In Chicago, as committeeman of the 32nd Ward, Rostenkowski retains a lot of patronage. He can give city jobs as favors. He is also a kingmaker. When openings occur on the Circuit Court of Cook County, Rostenkowski and Alderman Ed Vrydolyak award the plum judgeships.

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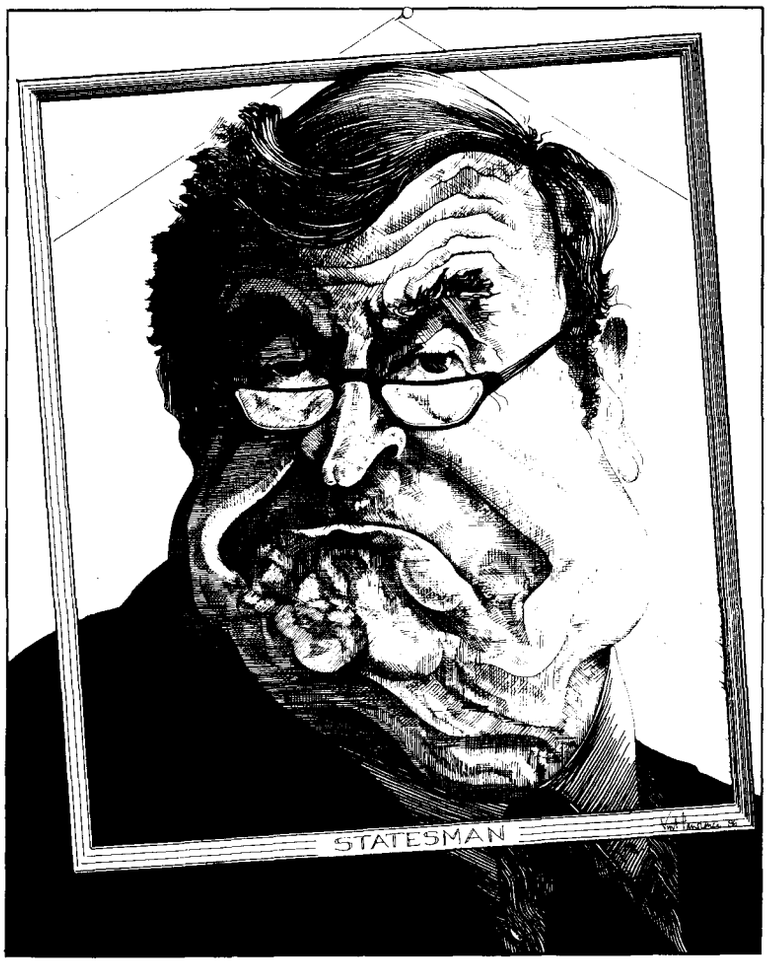
In Washington Rostenkowski gets what he wants by applying the rule of quid pro quo that characterized machine politics in Daley's Chicago. "There's no small talk. He doesn't stroke you, he doesn't give you any fluff," says Representative Charles Schumer. "He says, let's compromise. He looks you in the eye and says, here's what I want." Members of Congress praise Rostenkowski for remaining unfailingly true to his word.

For most of Rostenkowski's career in Congress, absolute loyalty was to one man: Richard J. Daley. Rosty had little identity other than as "Daley's man in Washington," and his aides joke that reporters think he still takes orders from the dead mayor. Rostenkowski never moved his wife and daughters to Washington. He would drive his station wagon all night Thursday from Washington to Chicago, to brief Daley on Friday. It was a simpler world. "If Daley said march the troops into Lake Michigan, you put on your bathing suit," said U.S. Court of Appeals judge Abner Mikva, who was a colleague of Rostenkowski in both the Illinois Legislature and Congress.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Loyalty to Daley entailed punishing enemies as well as rewarding friends. In 1968 Connecticut senator Abe Ribicoff bitterly criticized the "gestapo tactics" employed by Daley and the Chicago police at the Democratic Convention. When Ribicoff proposed a provision favorable to insurance companies in a House-Senate tax-bill conference committee in 1976, he didn't expect to meet a Dan Rostenkowski who had been studying the issue for days in order to destroy his position. "I went into the room and just kicked the brains out of them," Rosty later told Curt Suplee of the *Washington Post*. "He never forgets anything," Magrini says. "He keeps score in his head."

Rostenkowski's first love was sports, but he turned down an offer to play for the Philadelphia Athletics when a career in politics beckoned. He changed his baseball name "Rosten" back to Rostenkowski, and ran for a seat his father once held in the Illinois Legislature. With Daley's blessing, the 24-year-old Rostenkowski became the Legislature's youngest member in 1952. Two years later Daley sent him to the State Senate.

By 1958 Rostenkowski had a different job in mind. He convinced Daley that the machine needed younger men in Congress, working their way toward committee chairmanships. At the time the average age of the Illinois delegation was 72. After Representative Thomas O'Brien retired in 1964, Rostenkowski inherited his role as Daley's enforcer in Washington. He also took over O'Brien's slot on Ways and Means. It was an important seat for Rostenkowski, not because it made tax law, but because Ways and Means then controlled committee assignments. Ambitious and well liked, he moved steadily forward. Rosty was elected chairman of the House Democratic caucus in 1966 and reelected in 1968.

When the 1968 Democratic Convention raged out of control, Carl Albert banged his gavel, but couldn't control the delegates. An enraged LBJ, watching the melee on television, phoned Daley with orders to control the crowd. His beefy henchman Rostenkowski was dispatched to pull the gavel out of the hands of the diminutive majority leader and silence the antiwar demonstrators.

Albert remembered the insult when he was elected speaker in 1970. Hale Boggs asked him to make Rosty whip. Albert refused, and also saw to it that he was deposed as chairman of the Democratic caucus. It was the first setback of Rostenkowski's career, and it threatened to be a fatal one. "It destroyed me. I just wanted to crawl into a corner and die," he told the *Chicago Tribune* years later. But he dusted himself off and got back on his feet. In 1976 he helped win the votes necessary to elect Jim Wright majority leader in a close election. Wright and Tip O'Neill put him back onto the leadership ladder as chief deputy whip.

Daley died a year later, and Rostenkowski began expanding his allegiance to other powerful organizations. When President Carter's hospital cost containment package reached the House in early 1978, Rostenkowski, as

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chairman of the Ways and Means subcommittee on health, spiked it. At an American Hospital Association meeting, he announced an alternative to Carter's proposal, incorporating the hospital industry's recommendations for "voluntary" cost containment. The AHA is one of the powerful medical associations that gave Rostenkowski more than $10,000 in PAC money during the four-year period before this action, and more than $15,000 in the 20 months afterward.

Rostenkowski continues to accept honoraria and junkets worth thousands from groups such as Blue Cross & Blue Shield and the Federation of American Hospitals. He also has taken a substantial amount of money from liquor companies, and has gone on golfing junkets sponsored by the Distilled Spirits Council. It is hard to tell whether his strong opposition to excise taxes on alcohol is a cause or a result of the money and trips.

All told, Rostenkowski accepted $93,000 in honoraria in 1984, the most recent year reported. That's more than anyone else in the House. Jack Kemp was a distant second with $49,899. According to law, everything above $21,710 must go to charity. There's no limit on free vacations.

As for campaign contributions, it's not as if he needs the money. Rostenkowski has one of the safest seats in Congress, usually winning with over 80 percent of the vote. One recent opponent was a 75-year-old man named Walter Zilke, who had never run for political office before, raised no funds, and had an unlisted phone number. Questioned about his reasons for running, Zilke told the *Chicago Tribune*, "You never know what will happen in politics." To fight Zilke, Rostenkowski spent $170,000, buying billboards on the Kennedy expressway and full-page ads in the regional edition of *Time*. He won with 85 percent. Rosty has spent as much as $370,000 on campaigns only slightly closer.

About $600,000 remains in Rostenkowski's war chest, making it one of the largest in the House. He uses the money as a slush fund, lavishing thousands on steak dinners, country club bills, baseball tickets, and contributions to St. Stan's, his parish church. He also supplies an occasional $10,000 to other Cook County democrats, such as his alderman, Terry Gabinski.

More recently Rostenkowski formed his own PAC, the Chicago Campaign Committee, which had more than $400,000 left over at the end of 1984. The money is earmarked for contributions to other Democratic candidates running for the House. "Wright initiated it," Rostenkowski said, referring to the majority leader's practice of eliciting pledges of support for the speakership with campaign contributions. "It's deplorable. I've been forced into it because everybody else is doing it." Although Rostenkowski hasn't entered the speaker's race officially, he says he began "announcing interest" when he heard Representatives Tony Coelho and Richard Gephardt suggest that they were available. "I've been here as long as both of them combined," he said.

Rostenkowski's constituents haven't expressed much concern about scandals that might have destroyed another representative's career, like his earning $40,000 from a secret $500 investment in race track stock. When questioned about it in 1971, Rostenkowski told the now-defunct paper *Chicago Today*, "I got rid of it—I think it was 1961 or 1962, or maybe 1963." The stock in the Egyptian Trotting Association turned up on Rostenkowski's financial disclosure statement years later and he still owns it today. Leonard L. Levin (whom Rostenkowski later helped make a judge) served as a nominee to conceal his ownership. In 1977 Chuck Neubauer of the *Chicago Sun-Times* discovered that Rostenkowski rented one of his congressional offices in a building owned by his sisters (who concealed their ownership in Levin's name). Rostenkowski didn't bother to move the office.

Nor have the scandals slowed his ascendancy in Washington. In 1980 the Democrats' disaster was his gain. When Whip John Brademas and Ways and Means chairman Al Ullman both lost reelection bids, he had his pick of

FINDING THE FIX

HOW can Rostenkowski give special tax breaks to his friends in a public law without anybody finding out? Hiding the fix is easy. Finding it is hard. Here's an example. Browsing through the Ways and Means tax bill, a ten-pound monstrosity, you may notice a large number of exemptions from a crackdown on municipal bond abuse being granted "for an area in a city described in paragraph (4)(C)." These references begin on page 651.

Flipping back to paragraph (4)(C) on page 646, you'll find that the city in question has an American League baseball team and "a population in excess of 2,500,000." Well, that narrows it down to either New York or Chicago. But paragraph (4)(C) says that this city is also "described in section 145(d)(3)." You'll find section 145(d)(3) on page 569.

Section 145(d)(3) applies to cities in a state that adopted a new constitution in 1970, and had that new constitution take effect on July 1, 1971. There's only one such state: Illinois, of course. By process of elimination, you're in Chicago.

Now you can go back and try to figure out what the specific exemptions are for. Let's see—the first is for a redevelopment project in an area that was declared commercially blighted by the City Council on November 14, 1975. It will be approved by the City Council before July 1, 1986. The bond issue issue won't exceed $20 million. And so on. You get the idea.

Sometimes the attempt to hide a tax favor gets tripped up in its own complexities. A special exemption for a building being developed by Rosty's friend Thomas Rosenberg (discussed in the main article) is defined as applying to a "project [that] was the subject of lawsuits filed on June 22, 1984, and November 21, 1985." Unfortunately, Rostenkowski's staff got the dates wrong.

J.W.

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their jobs. Many were surprised when Rostenkowski, who admitted he was no technician, chose the taxing committee chairmanship over the post of whip, which is more purely political and considered a stepping-stone to the speakership.

ROSTENKOWSKI'S low point came in 1981 when he entered a bidding war with Reagan, seeing who could come up with a tax bill offering more goodies to special interests. "I want a tax bill that can win," he told Ways and Means Democrats at the time. "I don't do anything that I don't fight to win, and I never started a fight that I don't fight to win." He lost. Reagan's substitute for the Ways and Means bill passed the House handily, full of special breaks for people like independent oil producers that were there only because of competition from Rosty.

Until his recent makeover, Rostenkowski never troubled much to appear statesmanlike. In 1981 he told reporters that he voted against selling AWACS radar planes to Saudi Arabia even though he was in favor of it. " 'Yes' would have been the right vote," he said, "but I didn't want Jewish groups coming down on me." This "gaffe" so-called was an honest statement of Dan Rostenkowski's realpolitik. He didn't care much about the Middle East, so why waste points by getting people angry?

Lots of points get used doing favors for cronies. In 1980 the House passed the Mortgage Subsidy Bond Tax Act, which required housing developers using tax-exempt industrial development bonds to set aside 20 percent of their apartments for low-income residents. Rostenkowski saw to it that the restrictions didn't apply to a huge apartment building in Chicago called Presidential Towers, which was then in the planning stages. The favor was worth millions to the project, which was being developed by a group including one of Rostenkowski's closest friends, Dan Shannon.

Shannon, a former Chicago Park District commissioner and former head of the Teamsters' Central States Pension Fund, manages Rostenkowski's personal finances and his $600,000 war chest. He was paid by the Ways and Means Committee for "research" on a tax bill in 1972. Shannon also administers Rostenkowski's blind trust, which according to Rostenkowski's income disclosure statement earned between $5,000 and $15,000 in 1982 on a 1980 investment of $200.

The *Sun-Times* reported that Rostenkowski inserted a clause for Shannon in the 1982 tax bill as well that was worth seven million dollars to Presidential Towers. The exemption allowed investors to claim accelerated depreciation on their shares of the project. With Rostenkowski's help (and that of Jane Byrne, who was mayor at the time) Presidential Towers became the most heavily subsidized luxury apartments in modern history.

In 1984 Rostenkowski put in an even more valuable fix for 200 commodities traders, mostly from Chicago, who were accused of cheating the IRS of $300 million. Many of them are among Rostenkowski's largest contributors. His midnight maneuver shifted the burden of proof about the legitimacy of questionable deductions from the traders to the IRS—the opposite of the usual rule. Five years the IRS spent preparing the cases went down the drain.

MANY SAW Rostenkowski's effort on the Tax Reform Act of 1985 as a departure from his traditional horse trading. He learned from his 1981 failure that capitulating too much in the name of compromise can mean losing everything. He stood up to "the guys in the pencil-striped suits," as he calls them—the bevy of lobbyists who were waiting outside the Ways and Means caucus room—to produce a bill that cuts marginal rates, closes many corporate loopholes, and erases poor families from the tax rolls. Public interest groups like the League of Women Voters and Common Cause are delighted with the bill despite what they call its "imperfections."

His basic technique was to appoint working groups to handle divisive issues, such as the deductibility of state and local taxes. He assiduously avoided taking positions on those questions in advance, and agreed to back his task forces in exchange for their votes in favor of the final bill. Those who cooperated could also count on having pet projects exempted from the harsher new rules—on tax-exempt bonds, for example. According to the *New York Times*, these "transition rules," which conceal their beneficiaries by not referring to them by name, will cost the Treasury between two billion and three billion dollars a year. (See "Finding the Fix," page 22.)

No one got more little treats for good behavior than Rosty himself. Most members asked to exempt traditional pork: sewage treatment plants and convention centers in their districts. Rostenkowski's own favorites have little public utility. One special clause says that if Talman Home Federal Savings and Loan in Chicago changes ownership, new tax rules on operating losses won't apply. Rostenkowski keeps about $150,000 of his campaign fund in the bank.

One other luxury apartment building in Chicago's Old Town neighborhood won't be subject to the new restrictions on the use of tax-exempt bonds either. This is a controversial high rise being developed by Thomas B. Rosenberg, another close friend of Rostenkowski. Rosenberg says he made the request to Robert Leonard on Rostenkowski's Ways and Means staff. He claims that Rostenkowski put the exemption in not as a personal favor but because the project will be good for Chicago. Rostenkowski said he doesn't know anything about the clause's giving Rosenberg's project special treatment.

Rosenberg's building isn't mentioned by name or place. The bill refers instead to dates on which lawsuits were filed against the project and the amount of the bond issue. That's about ten lines in a bill of 1,357 pages, and Rostenkowski isn't about to tell you where to find them. Nobody really knows what other special favors are buried there. But at least this time we can look for loopholes in the bill. Usually with Rostenkowski one searches for a bill buried amid the fixes. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

A Mating Dance

The director James Ivory, the producer Ismail Merchant, and the screenwriter Ruth Prawer Jhabvala have been collaborating since 1963. They have made over ten films, all of which were unmistakably serious and most of which were nagged by dullness; the hallmark of their work has been good intentions. In the last decade, along with other films, they have turned to famous novels, beginning with Henry James. *The Europeans* (1979) was sluggish in every way. *The Bostonians* (1984) was much better in nearly every way and had Vanessa Redgrave's sterling portrayal of Olive Chancellor. Now the trio present another adaptation, E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View*. It's easily the best of their adaptations, but at the risk of sounding mean-spirited, I think it's the best because Forster's book is in all dimensions less demanding than James.

A Room with a View
(Cinecom International)

A Room with a View (1908) is, with reason, considered the weakest of the five major Forster works. It shows us English people in Florence and in Surrey, and among other matters, it shows them looking at Italy with English eyes, then at England with eyes quickened by Italy. It's the story of young Lucy Honeychurch, well bred and chaperoned in Florence by her aunt Miss Bartlett, who nonetheless is kissed by young George Emerson in a Tuscan meadow; who bears this secret, with her aunt, through her return home and her engagement to Cecil Vyse. Then she remeets George, who by coincidence (a coincidence that is like a bone in the book's throat) rents a house nearby with his father; is kissed again by George; breaks off her engagement to Cecil; and after the requisite inner turmoil, marries George. The shape of the story is so patently formal that, if it weren't for the exquisitely perceptive writing, the book would be only a broad satire of romantic novels (like one such novel that is written by a novelist *in* the book). And to ensure that the reader realizes that the author knows what he is doing, Forster gives each chapter a slightly mocking title—even if he only follows the numeral 4 with the words "Fourth Chapter."

Clearly the filmmakers have chosen a book that in no way, except that it's a period piece, approaches James. It approaches someone else. One doesn't need to read Forster's essay on Jane Austen ("I am a Jane Austenite. . . . She is my favourite author!") to recognize that *A Room with a View* was written under her influence. The mode is social comedy. The style is built on engaging rhythms, ticked with tiny surprises. (Lucy's first kiss is interrupted by the sudden arrival of her aunt: "The silence of life had been broken by Miss Bartlett, who stood brown against the view.") The book reads as if Forster, allowing for a century's passage, had set himself an Austen exercise with, I'd say, *Emma* in mind. But Forster's book quite lacks the quality much noted in Austen, the darkness below the politesse, the ruthlessness. "She is never for one moment soft in any way," says Walter Allen. *A Room with a View* is often soft in many ways; and this, despite its charms, is what dates the book, while Austen remains timeless. It is this lesser dimension, smaller than Austen—and James—that makes Forster's book more accessible to these filmmakers.

Jhabvala retains as much as possible of the book, which means that she gives as much as possible to the camera without losing sight or sound of Forster. There was no need to transmute any of this novel into cinematic equivalents, as David Lean was forced to do with the incomparably more complex *A Passage to India*. Jhabvala has quarried out her script neatly and, by including many of the chapter titles on prettily decorated title cards, has helped to "place" the film.

Tony Pierce-Roberts, whose previous work includes the dissimilar and inferior *Moonlighting* and *A Private Function*, has photographed as if to match the title cards in motion, but with no hint of the precious. Those superlative costume designers, Jenny Beavan and John Bright, who did *The Bostonians*, delight us again with the harmonies and easy richness of the clothes. A particular triumph is the dressing of Cecil, which touches caricature without losing reality.

Ivory and Merchant have cast the film as well as *The Bostonians* and with the same major flaw. Denholm Elliott is screen-filling as the elder Emerson, who has slightly absurd but quite moving concern for his son George's happiness. Maggie Smith, the Miss Bartlett, who is always dexterous, enters a new phase of her career as she begins to take on roles without sexual lives of their own. The local vicar is Simon Callow, quite jolly as the roast beef of Old England, clerical

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Kaos. Five of Pirandello's Sicilian pieces, done by the Taviani brothers. The fourth tale and the biographical epilogue are dispensable; the first three are done with theatrical grip and large vision. (Reviewed 3/17/86)

Ran. Japanese for "chaos." A master, Akira Kurosawa, displays his mastery, though he doesn't achieve the tragedy of *King Lear*, from which the script derives. (1/6&13/86)

Shoah. Hebrew for "holocaust." Claude Lanzmann has made a monument of testimony and a generally fine film—a nine-and-a-half-hour documentary (shown in two parts) that interviews survivors, witnesses, and participants of the Final Solution. (All of it was filmed after 1976.) (10/28/85)

Turtle Diary. Harold Pinter's screenplay, from Russell Hoban's novel, gives quietly delightful roles to Glenda Jackson, Ben Kingsley, and Michael Gambon. A London woman and man join forces to "liberate" the sea turtles in an aquarium. Unlikely material made captivating by reticently elegant execution. (3/10/86)

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style. And the two young men, Julian Sands as the heated George, Daniel Day Lewis as the Edwardian aesthete Cecil, could not be improved on. (I had just seen Day Lewis, son of the poet, as a mod homosexual London crook, in a picture called *My Beautiful Laundrette*.) But, as in *The Bostonians*, the leading female role is poorly cast.

Helena Bonham Carter is better as Lucy than she was in *Lady Jane* (reviewed February 17) chiefly because the role is much better for her—less demanding in some aspects, more varied in others. As in the previous film, Bonham Carter has the initial advantage of the right quality, the (unavoidable term) class that the role needs. Most of the time she is passable, the exceptions being the big dramatic moments where, hand-wagging and all, she looks amateur. But to be passable is not enough in a role that is pivotal in an elaborate gavotte. Bonham Carter is a remote presence, her remoteness underscored by her face. The trouble is not that she's not conventionally pretty. (Was the young Jane Fonda conventionally pretty?) Her round, undefined face with its inordinately heavy eyebrows is simply not a good actor's mask, as it used to be called. Her face is a barrier; we have to convince ourselves that she means what she says despite the way she looks—and sounds. Bonham Carter is like an undergraduate in a university production who seems rather good considering that her performance is only an intelligent diversion while she prepares herself for a career in another field.

Whatever Bonham Carter does achieve must be credited in some measure to Ivory, just as he must have contributed to the very good work of the others. Ivory makes the whole film move fluently enough; the lack of excitement must, in this instance, be charged as much to Forster as to him. Like Forster, he has opted for style rather than passion. To put it otherwise: we know it was an option with Forster; and Forster's choice fit Ivory's abilities.

All the more mystery, then, why he chose to use a lush Puccini aria under the beginning and end of the film—*"O mio babbino caro,"* which in fact comes from an opera (*Gianni Schicchi*) that was written ten years after Forster's novel was published. It's Italian, yes, but so are three or four thousand other airs that might have better fitted the film's temper.

Possibly Ivory was trying to underline a conflict recurrent in the book, between decorum and passion, as evidenced in the demure Lucy's fierce playing of Beethoven or the murder that she finds herself witnessing in the Piazza Signoria. In that case, Jhabvala and Ivory have chosen an ironic ending, not Forster's, that puts Lucy's passion in some doubt. She and George are back in the Florentine pension where they met, sitting in the window overlooking the Arno—the room with a view that marriage now permits them to share. As he kisses her cheek and neck, she reads a letter from her brother over his shoulder. As he kisses her bosom, she continues to read. Is this a comment on the marital life ahead? If so, why? There's no ground for it in anything earlier.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

An Englishman in New York

During the 1983-84 theater season, an English drama critic, Benedict Nightingale, was invited to become Walter Kerr's temporary replacement in the Sunday culture pages of the *New York Times*. He has now recorded his impressions of that year in *Fifth Row Center: A Critic's Year On and Off Broadway* (Times Books), and it makes for instructive reading. Nightingale is a humane, intelligent man who believes that theater is a central art. Perhaps that is why his book is such a lamentation over the quality and marginality of the New York stage. After nine months in the job, he fled to London, and no amount of arm-twisting by the *Times* has yet been able to lure him back.

Alternately bemused by and indignant over our sorry theatrical climate, Nightingale keeps searching throughout his "querulous journal" for the sources of the drought, generally using the relatively healthy London theater as his divining rod. What can account for the drop in attendance, the burgeoning production expenses, the closing of theaters, the loss of "traditional" theatergoing audiences, the paucity of new plays, the reliance on pretested products, the pinched horizons of American playwrights, the absence of great actors, and all the other well-publicized woes of the New York stage? Curiously, the 1983-84 season was a comparatively rich year for American theater. It included Mamet's *Glengarry Glen Ross*, Shepard's *Fool for Love*, Durang's *Baby with Bathwater*, Rabe's *Hurly-Burly*, Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*, and (with Nightingale as one of its lonely admirers) Kopit's *End of the World* among new American plays, not to mention such successful revivals and imports as *The Real Thing*, Peter Brook's *Tragedie de Carmen*, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, and *Death of a Salesman*. Nightingale writes appreciatively, if discriminatingly, about many of these works. Yet his tone is invariably that of someone performing extreme unction for a theater in its death throes.

Although he often tends to confuse American theater with New York, and New York with Broadway, Nightingale is undoubtedly correct in his diagnosis of our stage, and being a foreigner, he brings an unclouded eye to his subject. One may quarrel with his opinions of individual plays and productions—in fact, he invites disagreement—but his real value is as a sociologist of an ailing species. "What my masters at the *Times* seem to want," he writes, "is generalization," and Nightingale is not reluctant to fashion sweeping statements. True, he occasionally displays the limitations of the social scientist, particularly in his environmental emphasis. Insisting properly on a "public dimension" for drama, he may be a touch insensitive to its metaphysical dream nature, preferring plays that engage social-political subjects to those embarked on subterranean interior journeys. Correctly chastising the "relentless domesticity" of American "relationship" drama, he is not sufficiently critical of the externality, editorializing, and stylistic showmanship of his own countrymen, Michael Frayn and Tom Stoppard. A really fine modern play for Nightingale is something like *Jumpers* while the locus classicus of modern drama is still Osborne's *Look Back in Anger*. He is capable of praising Shepard and Mamet, but one suspects he would be happier if our playwrights could write more like Clifford Odets or Arthur Miller. ("If *Awake and Sing!* has dated, then so has *Death of a Salesman* and *All*

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My Sons, and much else that seems quite as eloquent to me as it did to my seniors.")

I would also quarrel with his protectionist view of the classics—a myopic conservatism he shares with many American critics. Claiming to recognize there is no such word as "definitive" in a good critic's vocabulary ("Anything with richness, resonance, or even ambiguity can be performed in different ways, with different emphases, different lights and shadows, peaks and deeps"), Nightingale nonetheless is consistently hostile to the reinterpretive deconstruction being performed these days on classical plays by experimental directors. (His first extended review was a trashing of Andrei Serban's *Uncle Vanya* for its "chutzpah" and "perversity.") He makes an exception of Peter Brook's *Carmen*, defending it against hostile music critics by drawing lines between "work that can on occasions be subjected to surgery and work so momentous that it can never be tampered with"—a distinction that restricts theatrical investigation to second-rate work.

THE real distinction, as Nightingale admits later, is a subjective one. The reason he will defend Brook's *Carmen*, and not Serban's *Vanya* (apart from knowing Chekhov better than Bizet), is because he *likes* it—though when he returns for a fourth time and hears it in English, he finds it cruder, coarser. His new opinion makes him speculate about the whole nature of a critic's judgment when confronted with the "exhilarating" changeability of the theater. Is it possible for an observer outside the process to distinguish errors in production from faults in a play? He is aware that reviewers will often attack actors for the decisions of directors, just as they will blame playwrights for distortions introduced by their collaborators. Gradually developing a healthy skepticism about the value of absolute critical judgments, he determines to devote more thought to analysis and less to unformulated opinion. Nightingale's Socratic modesty is his most winning quality; would that it might infect the rest of us opinionated wretches!

Fifth Row Center is generously larded with judgments, but these are usually pretexts for analyses; every new production inspires a digression on some new theatrical problem. Reviewing Dustin Hoffman in *Death of a Salesman*, Nightingale observes that while the cream of the profession will occasionally return to theater, most American actors are imprisoned by television and movie careers. Noticing that five months into his job only two new plays have opened on Broadway, he suggests that conditions in America do not favor the encouragement or development of playwrights. Seeing yet another work on Broadway that originated in London, he wonders about the health of a theater so dependent on English imports. During dark days he interviews Hal Prince, the Nederlanders, and the Shuberts (who defend New York as the most creative theater city in the world, but can cite only technical advances), continually looking for explanations of the disarray he sees around him. He concludes sadly: "I never quite managed to find the New York theatre. It always seemed to be out when I called."

Nightingale acknowledges the abundant talent, wealth, and enthusiasm around. What he misses is "the algebra that will bring all these elements together in a nice, satisfying equation." The algebra he favors is the source of Britain's theatrical health: generous government subsidy and the development of a national theater. And the person who gives him greatest hope is Joseph Papp, "probably the most important figure in New York and, indeed, in the American theatre," whose scheme for a "National Theatre on Broadway" Nightingale warmly endorses. That was 1983. What Papp proposed then was a string of new American plays produced for limited runs of eight weeks each in a chain of perhaps ten Broadway theaters, drawing actors from Hollywood and TV during short breaks in their careers, along with playwrights lured by a promise of $25,000 whether or not their plays succeeded. Low ticket prices, union concessions, private and public subsidy, air rights—these were the elements required to make the idea work in an arena that had recently proved inimical to untried new plays.

Papp's plan, while grandiose, was not impractical, and he undoubtedly possessed the entrepreneurial skills to realize it. That it still lies dormant three years later suggests that, like not a few of Papp's announced policies, it was displaced by some other project ranking higher on his agenda at the moment. I hope it is implemented soon because the commercial theater needs new plays. But Nightingale should realize that it's a formula for Broadway producing in subsi-

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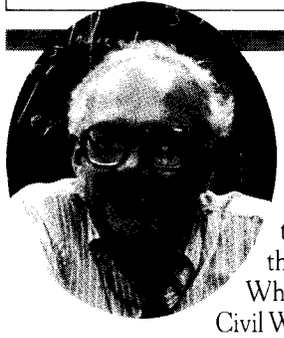

As a distinguished social critic and long-time reader of the Sage of Concord, Irving Howe here reassesses Emerson's influence on American culture. Starting in the 1850's, a host of former disciples arrayed themselves against Emerson's optimism. Howe explores their reaction in the literature of work (Melville and Mark Twain), the literature of Edenic fraternity (James Fenimore Cooper, Whitman, and Twain), and the literature of loss (all the post-Civil War writers).

The Emersonian spirit, Howe argues, pervaded their writings. It became a permanent part of the American psyche and is still a dominant spirit in the national experience.

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dized form, thus no more qualified to be called a "National Theater" than such old-line Broadway cooperatives as the Playwrights' Company or the Theater Guild. As I've frequently written, a "National Theater" is not likely to materialize out of a press conference announcing a company of vacationing Hollywood stars.

THE chances are it won't materialize in New York either, for reasons that drove Nightingale back to London. (Divining these reasons, his countryman Tyrone Guthrie established a repertory theater in Minneapolis.) Nightingale expresses regret that he was unable to travel much to review theaters throughout the country, and apart from seeing some soporific exercises by the virtually defunct Living Theatre, he didn't see much avant-garde work either. I doubt he would have appreciated it much. He displays, for example, typical British insularity toward such visionary innovators as Robert Wilson, whom he finds without "moral or social purpose." Yet it is in a handful of decentralized resident companies and a nucleus of itinerant performance artists that Nightingale might have found the theater he sought without success in New York. It is there, too, that he would have encountered a passionate, engaged audience—a true community following the progress of an artistic institution, rather than the hit-happy tourists he sees at Broadway shows. And it is there he might have met some dedicated theater artists—playwrights, directors, actors, designers—who have continued to care more about the ongoing process of their work than about the ongoing progress of their careers.

Such artists exist in New York. But lacking continuous employment and critical encouragement, they don't form a coherent community there, except in such ensembles as Mabou Mines and the Wooster Group (which often work out of the city) and possibly the more eclectic Public Theater. Many have therefore chosen to refuse New York—and that means refusing the promise of celebrity—believing that the answers to our problematic theater questions are not to be found in this traditional center. What results will not resemble the British model, where the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company coexist comfortably in London with a thriving commercial theater. Rather, it will be a considered response to the fact that for almost a decade now no major repertory theater company has been able to survive in New York City, where even our most celebrated actors and playwrights have no assurance of regular work. American theater must sow the seeds of its growth where the soil is welcoming, and this means finding communities where theatrical art is not treated like disposable merchandise. As Benedict Nightingale acknowledges in this wry, warmhearted, and ultimately depressing account of his visit here, we have the talent, the wealth, the enthusiasm, and the vision to build a great theater in America. The gifted artists whose work he saw in New York showed him everything but continuity. I suspect the missing algebra he could not identify in his equation was a fertile site.

INVITATION TO MAYHEM

Gerald's Party
by Robert Coover

(Linden Press, 316 pp., $17.95)

I've always admired Robert Coover's fiction a little more than I've enjoyed it. The pleasures of his work aren't obscure. *The Universal Baseball Association* especially recommended itself; years ahead of Coover's protagonist, I had as a boy invented a baseball game using cards and dice, organized a league with imaginary players, and so, like J. Henry Waugh, lived for a while in a surrogate, compensatory reality. *Spanking the Maid*, whose eroticism is a lure toward metaphysical awarenesses, delighted me with its daring and supple handling of the theme of time as ritual and obsession. Even *The Public Burning*, Coover's erratic, distended grotesquerie about the Rosenbergs and Watergate, has set pieces of great cleverness and charm.

Still, Coover's ideas often outrun his means. It's easy to get fatigued or irritated by his fiction, and yet honor its intentions—which is the way I feel about much of Barth, Hawkes, Gass, Barthelme, Pynchon, and Gaddis, the best writers we have. This has everything to do with the writers' seriousness, with the ambition of Coover and the others to make fiction do more or other than its conventional job of reflecting, exposing, comforting, diverting, or tacking meaning onto our actualities. It's hardly a novel insight: "advanced" fiction has always sought something else. But the ennui that seems to be a product of so much writing at the fictional borders is rarely discussed. Has anyone ever read *Giles Goatboy*, for example, or *The Recognitions*, or *Gravity's Rainbow*, with full unflagging concentration and steady murmurs of happiness? There are too many longueurs for that—too much of the opaque, of substance not fully rendered.

For all the different forms it takes, the project of these writers is to force language to reveal itself, and narrative modes to reveal, by analogy, ontological or metaphysical conditions. Unlike the classic 19th-century novel, such fiction (like theater that has stopped trying to "represent") offers very little assured hold on our experience beyond the page. The writing is the experience, functioning in one or more of these ways: as trap, fertile lie, jest, weapon, game, dirge.

It's a noble, nearly impossible attempt to bring us out of chaos and deceit, and sometimes an exhausting one. A clue to why this should be so can be found in Coover's *Seven Exemplary Fictions* (part of the book *Pricksongs and Descants*), in which he announces his program and ethic by way of a dedication to Cervantes:

> Your stories . . . exemplified the dual nature of all good narrative art: they struggled against the unconscious mythic residue in human life and sought to synthesize the unsynthesizable, sallied forth against adolescent thought-modes and exhausted art forms and returned home with new complexities.

There's a strain for the imagination in such an agenda, or rather in trying to fulfill it in these intellectually self-conscious times.

It's a strain that Cervantes, we may assume, never felt. A key phrase is "to synthesize the unsynthesizable"; the author of *Don Quixote* doubtless was unaware of a desire to do *that*, but for Coover and many of his colleagues the hopeless task is partly what spurs them on.

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Coover's new novel is ambitious, original, bizarre, harrowing, and often tedious, a book unlike any other long piece of fiction I know, although there are some technical resemblances to Nathalie Sarraute's work, *The Planetarium* in particular, and to Gaddis's *JR*. *Gerald's Party* takes place over a single evening and night. On the surface it seems to be at once a parody of detective fiction, a satire on our hedonism, a tale of life as theater, and interspersed with everything else, a set of reflections on time. It is indeed all of these, but only, as rapidly becomes clear, as strategies and instigations toward something deeper and more complex.

GERALD and his (unnamed) wife are giving one of their famous parties. The guests are all "creative" or pseudo-creative types, in their 30s and 40s mostly. At the center of the night's events is a woman they all know, a celebrated sexy actress named Ros, who is found murdered on the living room floor as the book begins. The police come and set up a zany "laboratory." (The inspector is a parodic figure who shouts out things like "Nobody leaves this house without my permission!" but also speaks of murder as "a psychologically imperative act that must be related to the total ontological reality!") More guests arrive, mayhem breaks out, more killings take place, toilets are stuffed up, the house is wrecked, sexual activity sprouts in every corner, chaos ensues, and the mystery is finally "solved."

Quickly the reader becomes aware that something is very wrong with the depiction of these events, that something "unlifelike" is going on at the heart of so seemingly naturalistic a tale. On the one hand Coover is exquisitely precise in his dense physical descriptions—a woman wears a "green-and-gold silk charmeuse dress," another a "renaissance-styled suit of cinnamon panne." On the other hand, everyone behaves with extraordinary inappropriateness. The police aren't called for several hours. The bodies are allowed to lie around throughout the night. A film is undertaken with the dead Ros as its "star." In general, all the horror that would normally be felt at such carnage is transposed to an emotional and moral key of astonishing remoteness from the facts, a business- (or fun-) as-usual mood that has the effect of framing the action in disjunction, under a harsh philosophical light.

The wife continues to cook and bring out food (fashionable hors d'oeuvres, elegant pies), and she says such things as "I do wish people wouldn't use guns in the house" and "somehow parties don't seem as much fun as they used to." Even more in this vein, Gerald (through whose awareness everything is rendered) responds with demented understatement: "I should make better use of my time." "Maybe these parties were a mistake." ". . . my mind [was] confused by all this."

Behind the weirdly irrelevant or dreamily incongruous responses to the horrific or revolting events (Gerald takes a sip of a discarded drink: "I noticed what looked like pubic hairs floating in it—I spat it out. But it was only someone's false eyelashes") is an impressive aesthetic and philosophical intention that, as nearly as I can make out, resembles in good part the one Coover ascribed to Cervantes: to fight against outworn and inherited modes, to create "new complexities," and finally, to encompass the unsynthesizable.

At the risk of oversimplifying, one can say that the discrepancy between act and reaction leaves a space for moral sensibility to work by undermining, in the interest of new consciousness, our expectations of narrative. What we anticipate—overt or implicit dismay, disgust, indictment—is untrustworthy, Coover suggests, because such reactions tell us nothing new at the same time that they invariably mask a residue of barbarism, the fascination we secretly have with disaster and excess.

More than that, the events immediately lend themselves—openly to the characters, covertly to us as voyeurs—to a theatrical impulse. Life is seen as a series of dramas, a set of impersonations: victim, lover, murderer, artist, host, policeman, wife. "What is life, after all," a character in a Coover story asks, "but a caravan of lifelike forgeries?" Things happen so we can enact or witness them. Inauthentic role-players, we await our cues. Conventional fiction, through "identification," reinforces this. In a crucial comment on the novel Gerald thinks: "Memories always come before the experiences we attach to them. . . ."

Memories are sundered from experience, actions from values; and one task of commonplace fiction is to jam them together again. In the same way, formal, traditional theater provides us with ac-

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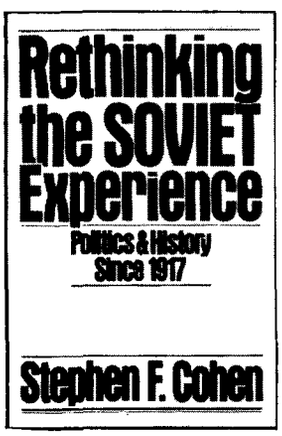

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tivities to which we can instantly assign value—value that otherwise floats above us in a realm of abstraction. But, as *Gerald's Party* is trying to demonstrate, our whole lives have become fictional, theatrical. All is matter for our histrionic cravings.

Theater, Gerald says, is "an atavistic folk rite," a "hallucination at the service of reality." Hence the obscene use of Ros's body for a film, the frequent monologues, the continual arrival of new "cast" members, the conversations that sound scripted. All is performance. In a scene at the end, in which Gerald and his wife make love in the wreckage, the infusion of theater into life is made startlingly clear: ". . . our pubes crushing together like remote underwater collisions, as ineluctable as punch lines."

AND YET there are difficulties. Coover's project of synthesizing disparate experience leads him to a novel whose structure of utterance and idea is thoroughly discontinuous, though moving along in a rough chronology. It is fragmented, jagged, elliptical, and centrifugal; the book proliferates rather than proceeds. Conversations are interrupted by thoughts and vice versa. Speeches are broken up by physical descriptions and then resumed. Much of the time the characters don't really talk to each other but as if to an invisible audience; the phenomenon is what the Germans call *aneinandervorbeisprechen*—to speak "past" another, to fail to connect verbally.

The purpose of all this disjunction and solipsism, as both the novel's subject and its style, is to sweep up in one net, as it were, the discontinuity and jumble of our behavior, to exhibit our values evading our actions and the other way round, to show how we act from primitive, unacknowledged motives. The aim is to make cognizable the disorder, illogic, and atomization of our social and psychic beings. Presiding over this valorous, quixotic endeavor is a dream other writers have had: to create an effect of synchronicity, of simultaneity, as a blow against the illusion of progression—to write a play, a poem, or a story in which everything exists, as nearly as possible, all at once.

But what problems for the mind, or to begin with, for the eye! I don't know another novel in which there are so many quotation marks, dashes, dots, parentheses. A dizzying profusion of punctuation separates the parts yet holds them together. One is hard put to keep track of who's speaking to whom, what exactly is happening. More than that, the constant breaks force you to keep casting your mind backward to the beginnings of interrupted sequences to pick up the threads, to separate speech from thought, to *follow*. The style also has the effect of diminishing the distinctiveness of the characters, who tend to merge or overlap with one another, to blur or to decompose. It's exhausting to have to keep identifying them, connecting them with what they did or said before. At times I longed for one of those lists of characters in Russian novels, which you consult to keep the names straight.

I battled with the book throughout. Yet at times I also yielded to it. Apart from the ambitiousness and the inventiveness, there's an accretion of incidental insight and wisdom. Here are two examples of the way the book works when it's telling us how the mind works:

> "Raped who?" wheezed Charley at my shoulder. "Whom," Dolph corrected.
>
> She was still wearing the apron. It was the one with the candy-stripes. From Amsterdam. "I love you, Gerald." "I know . . ." Or Monaco.

RICHARD GILMAN

Richard Gilman, who teaches at Yale, is the author most recently of *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

SAINT JAMES

The Courage of a Conservative
by James G. Watt with Doug Wead

(Simon and Schuster, 221 pp., $15.95)

When James Watt was crucified, sent to his cross by his own testimony, his prophetic mission was fulfilled. The story of his self-sacrifice, *The Courage of a Conservative*, is a most peculiar contribution to the vast literature of martyrology. There are, after all, few accounts of a martyr's passion written by a martyr himself; by definition the genre should rule out autobiography. We are therefore lucky to have Watt's effort, unique in so many ways.

This is a book by a man waging a relentless war against complexity and ambiguity. He sees contemporary politics as a Manichaean struggle between absolute good and absolute evil, between conservatives and liberals; or, as he once put it, between "liberals and Americans." We must return to simple virtues. To reanimate them, Watt simplifies politics, transforming it into an eschatological religion. "The contest between liberals and conservatives," writes the conservatives' conservative, "is a moral battle. It is a contest over who is right and who is wrong."

This "battle for America" is ultimately beyond politics, beyond the realm of profane worldliness. It can, Watt asserts, "be described in theological expressions." His tale is all weird Christology, about a father (Ronald Reagan), a son (Watt himself), and a holy ghost (the conservative spirit). In this pageant of Washington, Watt comes to the corrupt capital preaching the Truth. Playing the role of the Beast of Rome is the Liberal Establishment, whose pharisees of the press conspire his demise.

The plot is familiar. So is the writing. The cadences of *The Courage of a Conservative* are not those of the King James Version, but of the losing entry in a high school essay contest on patriotism: "We walked the beautiful coastal areas, the magnificent plains, the towering mountains, the lush valleys, the colorful deserts and the mighty forests. To see this land in all of its dimensions is inspiring." Zzzzzz. Watt's tone covers virtually the entire range of D-minus banality. There is patriotic banality. There is absurd banality: "We are Jews, we are Christians, we are whatever religion we want to be—or none at all. . . . We are pluralistic, championing individualism."

What's especially wonderful about this last statement is that Watt doesn't really believe any of it. Pluralism is not one of his strong points. Above all, he wants Americans (no liberals need ap-

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ply) to share in the fellowship of belief—his belief. But he's apparently overcome by enthusiasm for cliché; this one happened to wander into his head at the moment of literary creation. Watt's writing is to language what strip-mining is to conservation. Clearly, his manuscript was barely improved by his Manhattan publisher. Was this neglect—seemingly a deliberate attempt to allow his actual voice to be heard—another clever ploy by the Eastern Liberal Media Establishment to expose him to more persecution? Watt's book, however, should not be judged solely by its frequently meaningless passages. *The Courage of a Conservative*, though filled with cant, is intended to serve a higher cause—the resurrection of our "spiritual freedom."

WATT traces the American fall to 1857, when the McGuffey *Eclectic Readers*, grammar school textbooks "loaded with Bible verses," were rewritten. "Meanwhile, in Europe, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche was declaring flatly, 'God is dead.' " Marx and Darwin, Watt notes, were making mischief too. "When the modern liberal political movement was born in the 1930s, there was still no conscious intention of supplanting America's Judeo-Christian culture." The Army even dispensed copies of the New Testament. Onward, Christian Soldiers! But the progress of liberalism opened an "intellectual vacuum" into which stepped Jean-Paul Sartre and existentialism—"the rage on liberal college campuses." Then, in 1973, the *Humanist Manifesto* was issued, whose signatories included, yes, Lester Mondale, the brother of you-know-who. Two religions—"the Judeo-Christian and liberalism of humanism"—are locked in a cosmic struggle. But the liberals have the upper hand, in control of government, which is "shamelessly advancing a philosophy of humanism."

The national government is merely one of the instruments wielded by the satanic Liberal Establishment. "Labor, big government, big business, education, the media and the many special interest groups" are all under its aegis. "They rule America." While Watt has a fearful contempt for almost every American institution, he claims to be a true upholder of the "American system," which turns out not to be a system at all. Instead, it is a metaphysical dream, with "Judeo-Christian roots."

More than nuance escapes him. Even the most obvious distinctions are invisible. He sometimes gets so carried away with his excited discoveries of liberal plots against authority that he forgets that he has previously declared that the liberals "rule America." Watt's dissociation from his own thinking is particularly evident in his attempt to uncover the ultimate liberal goals. The "threats to our government," he writes, "have a chilling similarity to events following more recent revolutions in other lands." Which revolutions does he have in mind? Is liberalism communism? Or does "recent revolutions" refer to Islamic fundamentalism? Why not Nazism? Why not, indeed? Liberalism, according to Watt, draws upon "Nietzsche and the European philosophers who believed that the 'superior race' or 'superior people,' not the individual citizen, should make the decision for society." ("Europe," in Watt's book, is very evil, the Old World of vice and decadence. "European" ideas infect and contaminate an otherwise pristine America.)

AT LAST, in 1981, riding in from the West to save America from the "loss of absolutes," come Reagan and his sidekick, Jim Watt, rancher and sagebrush rebel. But that Watt has little to do with another James Watt, a Watt who was never a rancher, but always lived in town. This Watt spent most of his adult life in Washington, slowly and frustratingly trying to carve out a career among the conservative elite. He was a Chamber of Commerce functionary of the second rank, lifted to leadership of a right-wing legal foundation by a wealthy benefactor, the brewer Joseph Coors, and on the basis of this sponsorship placed in charge of the Department of Interior. This Watt is an inside-the-Beltway kind of guy, who is never mentioned by the other Watt, the rugged individualist. His inability to reconcile his life with his ideology is a triumph of ideology. Recognizing his own worldliness would be a traumatic shock. If he did, he might have great difficulty sustaining his belief that all wrongs can be ascribed to an external force, an omnipotent Liberal Establishment.

The press is that Establishment's most fearsome weapon, because it focuses on him. His description of the journalists assigned the task of covering him is the essence of the conservative paranoid style that the right has supposedly cast aside in the Reagan era:

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> They followed me everywhere I went, recording dozens and dozens of hours of my speeches, sometimes as many as ten speeches a week. . . . They were, by their own admission, looking . . . for a gaffe, recording thousands and thousands of words in search of a few that could be used against me. . . . What was of interest were their efforts to embarrass me for daring to state the truth.

The Beach Boys flap was a conspiracy. "Members of a liberal press saw an opportunity to create a controversy by censoring the facts and avoiding the real issues." The problem, really, was drugs and rock 'n' roll. Watt just wanted to ban *that* on the Mall—not the Beach Boys. They happened to be scheduled to play; their bouncing by his dictate was incidental.

AS FOR Watt's joke about a new departmental panel—"a woman, a black, a Jew, and a cripple"—the press response was only a prelude to congressional persecution:

> The majority of the members of almost every committee sought to embarrass, ridicule and demean the Reagan administration and its spokesmen. . . . The attack was directed against me personally. That was how they got headlines. . . . But how much more could I take?

His chauffeur dropped him off at the Interior building. In his office he "confronted" a "simple framed item . . . General Douglas MacArthur's last address to his West Point academy. Across the top are these large words: Duty Honor Country. . . . There was no personal sacrifice too great. . . ." So Watt gave himself for America—James of Montana, the King of the Judeo-Christians. "I bowed my head and gave a silent prayer to Him from Whom my strength and courage come. My discouragement ebbed away, a smile welled up from inside. I was again ready to make decisions in the next round in the battle for America."

Watt's conservatism is not shared by all conservatives. But it is espoused by millions, who have increased in numbers over the years and mobilized behind Reagan, the conservative standard-bearer since 1968. What happens in the "next round" in 1988, when Reagan departs, and the forces he has built up are loosed within the Republican Party?

Watt, who steadfastly refuses to make elementary distinctions, would erase the distinction between the civil and the religious, a separation he construes as a liberal lie. Thus he imports his theology into his politics, which he organizes around the idea that to be born-again one must first experience a kind of death. "I knew the personal price," writes Watt. Applied to 1988, Watt's example might prove to have grave consequences for Republicans. But for those Christian soldiers, an army of martyrs, eager to ascend to paradise, the end is not the end. Rather, it's the price for resurrection.

SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

Sidney Blumenthal is a writer on the national staff of the *Washington Post*. His book *The Rise of the Counter-Establishment: From Conservative Ideology to Political Power* will be published by Times Books in August.

CRITICS IN DESPAIR

The Return of Consciousness by Tawfiq al-Hakim translated by Bayly Winder

(New York University Press, 89 pp., $30)

An Unfinished Odyssey by Cecil Hourani

(Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 228 pp., £12.95)

The Middle Eastern condition today is such that the modern cartographer might be excused if he were to adopt a device familiar to his medieval predecessor and mark the Levant, the Fertile Crescent, Persia, and other neighboring areas with the legend that here be dragons. For these have become areas of darkness and frightfulness. Journalists and reporters, with their cameras and tape recorders and radio telephones and satellites, can barely transmit more than fleeting pictures and hazy reports of kidnap and hijack, of murder, massacre, and slaughter. We, the onlookers, stand and watch the spectacle, wondering how people who, 50 or 75 years ago, led decent, orderly, God-fearing lives can suddenly become like a swarm of locusts, devastating and destroying whole areas of settled society. How this frenzy seized them, and how long before they break out of it, are both matters of fearful speculation.

The frenzy is political, driven by an impossible dream of Arab unity, or of an Islamic restoration. To outsiders the dream seems beyond realization, the frenzy merely feeding upon itself, seeking a momentary assuagement in extravagant words and violent actions. Moreover, there is no trace of self-criticism, no recognition of the wretched condition to which inhabitants have reduced themselves. But the frenzy, mercifully, is not universal. In fact, a great many are resigned in self-protection to shrugging their shoulders and looking the other way, resigned above all to silence, that great resource of those who have to endure tyranny, lawlessness, and insecurity.

But occasionally, very occasionally, someone does break the silence. The reasons vary. For the Syrian Ba'athist Sami al-Jundi, it was unendurable despair. For the Jordanian Ba'athist Mumif al-Razzaz, who published *The Bitter Experience* in 1967, describing his misadventures in Ba'athist politics in Syria, it was utter disgust. But his political experience in Syria cannot have been bitter enough, for after a time in Beirut, Razzaz journeyed to Ba'athist Iraq, where we hear he has recently died by poisoning (at the hands of the authorities, it is said).

From Egypt, too, we hear some voices raised in deprecation and disapproval. Two in particular are noteworthy. They belong to two illustrious men of letters, Tawfiq al-Hakim and Najib Mahfuz. In 1974 in Beirut, Hakim published a slim volume that he had written in 1972, some two years after Nasser's death. The book, *The Return of Consciousness*, which has just been published in English, describes the initial (and fatal) attraction of

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Nasser's revolution for the educated classes, and the effect of the ensuing despotism on intellectual and social life.

When the military coup d'état of July 1952 took place, Hakim writes, he "never for a moment felt anything except absolute enthusiasm for the measures it took." This in spite of his awareness that the "movement of purification" that the triumphant officers had unleashed simply amounted to the "incitement of every employee to complain about his chief, every inferior to attack his superior, and every colleague to roast his peer." Under the revolution of 1952, censorship was all-powerful, truth was obliterated, hypocrisy was triumphant. Imprisonment and torture were rampant. Hakim confesses that, through all these terrible events, he and his fellow intellectuals "sat quietly as though the situation were natural." The regime "bewitched us with the glitter of hopes that had fascinated us for a long time, and they intoxicated us with the wine of 'attainment' and 'glory,' and we got so drunk that we lost consciousness."

IT WAS Nasser who bewitched and subjugated: "We had no means and no strength except to stick with him because he had stripped us throughout the years of every independent thought and of every strong personality other than his own." But the magician was himself bewitched and dominated by an idea, that of becoming the leader of the Arab world. It is, Hakim writes, "what has ruined us all and what possessed the thought of Abd al-Nasir and made him a destructive force—destructive of himself, of Egypt, and of the Arabs."

Nasser hoped to attain his ambition chiefly through mobilizing the Arabs to defeat Israel. He made the Palestine conflict into the central issue of Arab politics, and thus finally encompassed his own ruin, plunging his country into a humiliating defeat in 1967. Hakim describes the great shock with which this unexpected defeat was received. In a long interview that appeared in July 1984 in the Paris Arabic-language periodical *al-Mustaqbal*, his fellow Egyptian Najib Mahfuz, probably the best-known novelist writing in Arabic today, goes so far as to say that the Palestine problem, in becoming an Arab problem, has quite overwhelmed what Mahfuz considers to be the goal of the Arabs. This goal, he told his (unfriendly and antagonistic) interviewer, is civilization, with which the very existence of the Arabs is bound up. Billions have been fruitlessly spent on the cause of Palestine, and not a cent on developing civilization in the Arab world. As for Palestine, fight for it if you can; but if you cannot, then sit down and negotiate.

In reality, Mahfuz affirms, the Arabs have only one enemy, and it is backwardness. The world is building cities in space, Mahfuz says, and among the Arabs people live in tombs. (Mahfuz is referring to the large cemetery on the outskirts of Cairo where innumerable squatters have taken over mausoleums as dwelling places.) "I sometimes ask," he ends by saying,

> what is happening in the region, and they tell me that it is all a game being played by the Great Powers. I then ask myself: are we rubbish? Have we no minds? Is it the Great Powers who are treating us like playthings? Have we Arabs become a kind of toy or plaything? Is there humiliation greater than this?

What makes Hakim and Mahfuz so noteworthy is their readiness to unburden themselves publicly, to say what they—and no doubt many others who maintain a prudent silence—really think. This is refreshing, because in the region where they live and write, unspoken official pressure, not to mention outright censorship, prevents anything being said that departs from the line that at any given moment the authorities wish to propagate.

Happily such impediments to thought and to speech are absent in the English-speaking world. This is not to say, however, that orthodoxies and conformism are not found here. They do establish themselves, in fact, and erect barriers of self-censorship, which have practically the same mouth-stopping effect as the more blatant and brutal methods of Middle Eastern despotism. One such orthodoxy relating to the modern history of the Middle East is what I have called the Chatham House Version, the doctrine that Arabism would inevitably and rightfully triumph, that the problem of Palestine was the central problem of the Middle East, that the only sensible and just policy for Britain was to promote the cause of Arabism—an orthodoxy that succeeded, over the decades, in becoming well rooted and widespread. It is thus refreshing to come upon a book whose author had been much exposed, by reason of his work and friendships, to this orthodoxy, and who yet writes in clear disregard of its certainties and pieties.

The book is *An Unfinished Odyssey*, a memoir by Cecil Hourani. He was born in Manchester, where his father, who came from Marjayoun in Lebanon, had established himself in business in 1891.

The Invisible Link
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Cecil's father was a staunch Presbyterian; his son was sent to Mill Hill, a public school with nonconformist connections and traditions. From Mill Hill Cecil went to Magdalen College, Oxford. At the outbreak of war, shortly after his graduation, he went to Lebanon to learn Arabic, which a War Office committee thought might prove useful to the war effort. This was at the recommendation of Professor H.A.R. Gibb of Oxford, who knew his background and who was to recruit his brother Albert to a wartime section of Chatham House, where he would do research and prepare papers on Near Eastern affairs under Arnold Toynbee's general oversight.

WHILE Hourani was at Oxford, the Arab rebellion of 1936 broke out in Palestine. Hourani tells us that it aroused in him the same passionate feelings as did the republican cause in Spain among his contemporaries. His interest in Arab politics as an undergraduate was a sign of his search for an identity. When a few years later he arrived in Lebanon to learn the language, it seems he was engaged in the same search:

> Was I coming as an Englishman looking for ways to serve the country of his birth, or was I a Lebanese looking for his roots? The truth was that I was both, but this was not easy for everyone to believe. It took me many years before I could resolve the duality of my own mind, and reconcile the loyalties of my divided self.

He served as an officer in the British army, thus doing his duty toward the country of his birth. After the war he became director of the Arab Office in Washington, which had been set up to make propaganda for the Arab cause in Palestine. To him, this represented "a vital step towards recovering part of my lost or still unfound identity." This search for an identity seems now at last to have ended, for toward the end of the book Hourani describes himself as a Lebanese patriot.

Hourani accepts that the Lebanese belong to the family of the Arabic-speaking peoples, but he does not believe that the Arabs constitute one nation, or that Lebanese interests are necessarily identical with those of the other Arabic-speaking peoples—in great contrast to his youthful "vivid imaginings of a new Arab state and society." It is very interesting and instructive to follow, in Hourani's memoir, the course of his political education from the time when, during his first visit to Lebanon, Arab nationalism attracted his "enthusiastic" support until he came to define himself as a Lebanese patriot. His experiences as an official spokesman for the Palestinian cause in Washington must have contributed to his disillusionment. Palestinian Arabs whose cause he was championing regarded him "as an outsider who for one motive or another had ingratiated himself into their cause."

HOURANI was associated with Musa Alami, who had been the chief force behind setting up the chain of Arab Offices in which he (along with his brother Albert) was to work. But Alami was considered by Haj Amin al-Husayni, the Mufti of Jerusalem, as a rival, and the Arab Offices under Alami's aegis as a challenge to his power, to be destroyed in one way or another. The pro-Nazi Mufti proceeded to attack Alami as pro-British, on the assumption that "to be on good terms with those you are trying to convince is equivalent to collaboration with them." Hourani finds this attitude still current among many Arab leaders today, who take the view that "the only patriotic or national attitude is to cultivate the enemy of your enemies in the hope that they will fight the battle you are unable or unwilling to fight yourself."

In his campaign against the Arab Offices, the Mufti was helped by Azzam Pacha, the first secretary-general of the Arab League, who was jealous of an institution he did not fully control himself. Indeed, Hourani regards the appointment of Azzam as one of the most important reasons for the failure of the league. Azzam was incapable of setting up the institutions without which the league was doomed to remain simply an idea:

> The secretariat was soon filled by Egyptians and Arab officials sent there by their governments either because they wished to get rid of them, or to do a favour to this and that leader, and their laziness was only matched by their incompetence. No succeeding Secretary-General has been able or willing to deal with this problem, and indeed it has become worse, and has reached its apotheosis at the present time.

When Hourani was director of the Washington Arab Office, relations between the Arabs and the Zionists had not yet become hopelessly bitter and hostile; he and his staff could still meet Zionists and carry on their disputes "in a civilized and generally peaceful climate." This climate, which Hourani was anxious to maintain, was at the opposite pole of "the aggressive attitude which later generations of Arab propagandists and publicists were to assume."

THIS aggressiveness of approach, this intimidating technique, is but one aspect of the thuggishness of contemporary Arab politics. Hourani tells us that his friend and patron Alami "did not approve or like the methods by which Haj Amin controlled the [Palestine Arab nationalist] movement, which included intimidation and assassination, having a healthy and well-founded desire not to become one of the Mufti's victims." But the course of modern Arab history has shown that Alami's is clearly the losing cause, and this, too, must have played a significant role in Hourani's disillusionment. The last footnote in his book observes that readers "will have been perhaps impressed by the number of friends and acquaintances listed in these pages as assassinated." "There are," he adds, "many others."

When the Arab League was being set up, Hourani tried to have Alami appointed secretary-general. But Azzam was preferred by the members of the league because "in addition to being an Arab nationalist, rare among Egyptians at the time, [he] also believed in a form of Islamic nationalism quite foreign to the sophisticated, Westernized, liberal background of Alami." These words indicate in what direction Hourani would have liked the Arab world to move. Like Tawfiq al-Hakim and Najib Mahfuz, he considers Western culture to be universal culture, and believes that Arab culture, if it is not to sink into sterility, must become part of this universal culture "which is the only vital force today." In his adventures in the Arab world, Hourani was to find that the Arabs rejected what he aspired to for them. In the epilogue of his book, he concludes that efforts to persuade the Arab masses that their Arab identity is more important than their Islamic one have failed, that the loyalty of these masses has remained obstinately Islamic.

When he was in Washington from 1946 to 1948, Hourani befriended Habib Bourguiba, who was then engaged in his struggle for Tunisian independence. A few years later Bourguiba became the president of an independent Tunisian Republic, and asked Hourani to serve as his adviser. Bourguiba, like Alami, was open to the West, and far removed from fanaticism and thuggishness, and thus

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for Hourani an attractive figure who promised to exercise power in a responsible and civilized manner. But just as with the Palestinian Arabs, whose cause he was happy to serve but who suspected his motives and never really accepted him, so too in Tunisia his position became uncomfortable: "I was sensitive to the jealousies which anyone in my position was bound to arouse among those who envied my closeness to the seat of power." Again, he disapproved of the manner in which Tunisian ministers nationalized the property of long-established French, Italian, and Maltese farmers and small craftsmen, and whose consequent departure would impoverish Tunisian economic and social life. These settlers, he writes, were "an asset in preserving for Tunisia that cosmopolitan, multinational, and open society which, along with Egypt and Lebanon, distinguished it from other Arab countries."

HOURANI gave up his position as adviser to Bourguiba in 1962, and embarked on a remarkable enterprise—to establish an international cultural center at Hammamet on the Tunisian coast. His ambition was to bring to Tunisia all that was best in artistic and intellectual endeavor, and thus to begin the process whereby Arab culture, while retaining its specific character, would be injected with vitality and vigor by world culture, and become enmeshed with it. Here, too, Hourani ultimately failed. Though he succeeded in establishing Hammamet as a going concern, he encountered determined opposition from the minister of culture—who was later to become the secretary-general of the Arab League. Among the minister's chief objections was that the Cultural Centre was anti-traditional and antinational, that it was introducing alien and dubious ideas into Tunisia. The minister triumphed and Hourani lost Bourguiba's favor. He returned his diplomatic passport and left Tunisia in 1967.

After the Tunisian disappointment, Hourani went to live in Lebanon, which proved to be the scene of his last, and most grievous, disappointment with the modern Arabic-speaking world, with its disturbed and sanguinary politics. He rented a house in Beirut, and lived there and in Marjayoun, where he had inherited his father's house and garden. He was thus well placed to observe the gradual disintegration of the Lebanese polity, which was accompanied by the great increase in power of the Palestinians, which no Lebanese government felt able to resist and control.

A landmark in the destruction of the Lebanese state was the Cairo Agreement of 1969, whereby the Lebanese government under pressure from Nasser and other Arab states secretly allowed Palestinian forces to operate in the south. The agreement did not constitute a carte blanche for the PLO; but in fact the Lebanese government, "presided over by the deplorable Charles Helou, later by the disastrous Suleiman Franjiyyeh," made no serious effort to control the armed bands who eventually took over the region. This led to clashes, in turn, with the Israelis. Willy-nilly the inhabitants of Marjayoun and its environs were caught in the cross fire.

Hourani describes an occasion when, accompanied by the mayor of Marjayoun, he went to see Abu Iyad, who occupies second place in Al-Fatah after Yasir Arafat. The mayor asked why, when Fatah forces were attacked by Israel, they replied by bombarding Marjayoun. Abu Iyad replied: "We cannot fight Israel, but we can fight Saad Haddad." The Lebanese officer Major Haddad had found himself to be the only representative of the Lebanese government in Marjayoun, and believed that he had a duty to protect its people. By fighting him, Hourani observes, the PLO could convince their followers, and the Arab governments that financed them, that they were engaged in a serious war against Israel.

IT WAS to protect themselves from PLO attacks, from massacres such as Hourani describes, and from the total extermination that they rightly feared, that the inhabitants of Marjayoun were compelled to appeal to Israel to provide the security that their own government was too impotent to provide. At one point in 1977 Hourani asked Elias Sarkis, who had succeeded the deplorable Helou and the disastrous Franjiyyeh, to order the Lebanese army to keep a road out of Marjayoun open so that the town should not be completely cut off from Beirut. Sarkis refused: "He could not put the security forces at risk, they might be fired upon! I pointed out that this was a risk which was inherent in their functions, and that the alternative was impotence. But he was adamant."

No one knew or cared what was going on in the south. Not the press, not the Lebanese government, not the American Embassy in Beirut, which was "guided,

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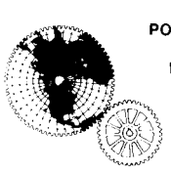

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in part at least, by its concern to maintain a discreet connection with the P.L.O. under whose protection it believed it lived." As for UNIFIL, which was positioned in the south in 1978, it "became increasingly dependent for its functioning on the degree of good relations it could maintain with the P.L.O.," and thus, instead of helping the Lebanese state to regain its sovereignty, "it became the instrument whereby the P.L.O. maintained its control over large areas of the south." For a brief moment the Israeli invasion in the summer of 1982 promised to reestablish peace and security, but this hope, too, quickly vanished.

It is safe to say that the director of the Arab Office in Washington in 1946 could hardly have imagined the disappointments, the failures, the disasters he was to witness in the decades that followed, which were incident upon political action and the life of politics in the Middle East. Almost the only reason for optimism that Hourani's reader can carry away with him is that, in the words of his title, the odyssey is unfinished. But the story so far, whether told by Hakim or Mahfuz or Hourani, is one of desperate sadness.

ELIE KEDOURIE

Elie Kedourie is professor of politics at the London School of Economics. His most recent book is *Islam in the Modern World* (New Republic Books/Henry Holt and Company).

DIVIDED CHILD

Collected Poems 1948-1984 by Derek Walcott

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 516 pp., $25)

At the recent International PEN Congress in New York, as part of a panel considering "Alienation and the State," Derek Walcott spoke of having been born on an island, St. Lucia, with no ruins, no museum, no dates. "It was," he said, "a country without a history." The task he set himself as a young poet was not to discover his history but to create one, and to make it out of himself, out of his circumstances and his birthright.

Can it be coincidental that the title of his second collection is *The Castaway* and that a recurrent figure in his early work is Robinson Crusoe? Walcott himself was never at home on his island. He has called himself a "divided child"—a black with a white grandfather; a colonial schoolboy who sang the verse of "Rule Britannia" that goes "Britons never, never shall be slaves"; part of the educated middle class in a backwater of poverty, and raised as a Methodist in a Catholic country. In sum, the self-conscious outsider in his tiny paradise.

These contradictions, when they are dramatized or when they are suppressed, animate the poems he wrote until 1970. One of his best-known early poems, "A Far Cry from Africa," ends with a series of questions he will not be able to answer for many more years. What seems a historical dilemma is actually a quarrel with the self:

> I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
> Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
> I who have cursed
> The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
> Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
> Betray them both, or give back what they give?
> How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
> How can I turn from Africa and live?

It is not just the rhetorical authority or the charged estrangements of his subsequent books that make these early poems seem, especially in this retrospective collection, so stiff and unconvincing. They are—for a good reason but to no good effect—deliberately derivative, defiantly literary. From the start, his language and its literature were an available history, a means of composing the self. Actually, Walcott grew up with three languages—French Creole, English Creole, and English. Though he mostly reserved patois for his plays, he has incorporated it into his poems, and some readers have objected. Helen Vendler, for instance, has criticized Walcott's poems in dialect as damp matches, and insists that "mixed diction has yet to validate itself as a literary resource with aesthetic power."

I think Vendler is wrong, and so would readers of Dante and Burns, or of such contemporaries as Tony Harrison in England or Tom Paulin in Ireland. But the real point is that all poetry is written in dialect. As Craig Raine wryly notes, "most bad poetry is written in the dialect of the previous age." Our best poets have created their own. Though we use the term "style" because we more often read than listen to poems, dialect would just as likely describe an Ashbery or a Plath poem whose distinctive accents are unmistakable. Walcott too is a poet who wants to be both read and listened to. His style could be called English speech with a West Indian inflection; or, as he himself might describe it, he thinks in one language and moves in another. Even his "standard" poems have a peculiar loping quality to their lines, a slower rhythm than those of his peers.

WALCOTT was probably attracted to patois for two reasons. First, at the level of diction and metaphor, as he once told an interviewer, because "the things I saw around me were being named by people in a new language." Second, at the level of gesture and tone, because he associates patois with a native theatricalism: "My society loves rhetoric, performance, panache, melodrama, carnival, dressing up, playing roles. Thank God I was born in it, which made me love live and artificial theater." Walcott tends to use dialect precisely when he wants these extravagant effects; in fact, "artificial theater" is as good a name for it as any. At its worst, it is picturesque. At its best, it can be subversive, upsetting political and cultural habits. And some of his best sustained poems use it. "The Schooner *Flight*" is one. "Either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation," boasts the poem's hero, a mulatto sailor named Shabine, a Caribbean Ulysses. The mixed diction of Walcott's poems eloquently expresses his mixed state, without indulging in either ethnic chic or imperial drag. Here is his gift of tongues, which enables him to speak with intimacy and power.

The dialect he most often used in his apprentice work, however, was the florid grandiloquence of Yeats, Eliot, Dylan Thomas. The experience in, and of, his first few books is largely literary. This was an act both of homage and of assimilation. West Indian literature—

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its "postcard poetry" and limp tract-novels—simply didn't exist for him, and English literature was his birthright. "Either man is a myth or a piece of dirt," he once said. "Roman, Greek, African, all mine, veined in me, more alive than marble, bleeding and drying up. Literature reopens wounds more deeply than history does. It also releases the force of joy." But in such borrowed robes, his early work is, to use a phrase of his own devising, "fireless and average." Not until his book-length poem *Another Life* in 1973, when he turned his manner into his subject matter, did Walcott use literary history to tap a responding strength in himself.

The poem is the centerpiece of this *Collected Poems*, and remains central in Walcott's career. It is also one of the best long (there are over 4,000 lines) autobiographical poems in English, with the narrative sweep, the lavish layering of details, and the mythic resonance of a certain classic. His story is a simple and traditional one, the growth-of-the-poet's-mind, how "he fell in love with art,/and life began." Love and art are entwined initiations: at the same time he is learning from his painter-mentor Gregorias, he is falling in love with Anna. Because he turns to art as "another life," he turns too toward the body and toward the landscape. Walcott is a poet of vivid sensual and celebratory power, as when he describes Anna:

> For late one afternoon, when again she stood
> in the door of a twilight always left ajar,
> when dusk had softened the first bulb
> the colour of the first weak star,
> I asked her, "Choose,"
> the amazed dusk held its breath,
> the earth's pulse staggered,
> she nodded, and that nod
> married earth with lightning.
> And now we were the first guests of the earth
> and everything stood still for us to name.
> Against the blades of palms and yellow sand,
> I hear that open laugh,
> I see her stride
> as ruthless as that flax-bright harvester
> Judith, with Holofernes' lantern in her hand.

He knows enough to be rueful: "The hand she held already had betrayed/them by its longing for describing her." The tropical landscape also becomes text:

> But drunkenly, or secretly, we swore,
> disciples of that astigmatic saint,
> that we would never leave the island
> until we had put down, in paint, in words,
> as palmists learn the network of a hand,
> all of its sunken, leaf-choked ravines,
> every neglected, self-pitying inlet
> muttering in brackish dialect, the ropes of mangroves
> from which old soldier crabs slipped
> surrendering to slush,
> each ochre track seeking some hilltop and
> losing itself in an unfinished phrase,
> under sand shipyards where the burnt-out palms
> inverted the design of unrigged schooners,
> entering forests, boiling with life,
> *goyave, corrosol, bois-canot, sapotille.*

His sense of vocation *is* his identity, and what we watch evolving is a personal story of nationalistic dimensions ("a man no more/but the fervour and intelligence/of a whole country"), as well as a major heroic myth with its traditional motifs. The infernal past in Walcott's version is the great fire that destroyed Castries, the capital of St. Lucia, in 1948, the year from which Walcott counts his poetic career. In *Another Life* he calls it his "ruined Ilion." As in Dante, the protagonist is instructed by a master-artist, and inspired by a beloved. And the traditional epic tasks—a reconciliation with the fathers and the founding of a new city—are taken up in a new way.

It is the example of a painter named Gregorias on which the young poet-hero models himself. (In reality, "Gregorias" was Harry Simmons, and his untimely suicide becomes the "stroke" that ends the poem on a troubled note.) In the mature work of the past decade, it is Robert Lowell who has been Walcott's model. One poem not included in this *Collected* is "R.T.S.L.," Walcott's elegy for Lowell, but his influence is everywhere apparent in Walcott's three most recent books, *The Star-Apple Kingdom* (1979), *The Fortunate Traveller* (1981), and *Midsummer* (1984). Like Lowell, Walcott's mode has in these books shifted from the mythological to the historical, from fictions to facts, and his voice has gotten more clipped and severe. There are times when the influence is almost too direct, as in "Old New England," where he paces off Lowell's own territory:

> Black clippers, tarred with whales' blood, fold their sails
> entering New Bedford, New London, New Haven.
> A white church spire whistles into space
> like a swordfish, a rocket pierces heaven
> as the thawed springs in icy chevrons race

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down hillsides and Old Glories flail
the crosses of green farm boys back from 'Nam.
Seasons are measured still by the same
span of the veined leaf and the veined body
whenever the spring wind startles an uproar
of marching oaks with memories of a war
that peeled whole counties from the calendar.

At other times the influence is more diffused, as in *Midsummer*'s diaristic sequence of poems, a format that controls the dynamics of fact and tone.

NEARLY half of the 54 poems that make up *Midsummer* have been left out of this new edition. Though what remains shines with a renewed brilliance, it's like seeing stills from a film. In its original edition, *The Fortunate Traveller* is divided into three parts—North, South, North—to reflect the poet's displacements, his temperamental and intellectual affinities, his second thoughts. But that arrangement is lost in the *Collected*'s curtailments.

Some poets gain by being read in bulk like this. I don't think Walcott does. Not only do I miss the deleted poems, I miss the wait between the books, the surprise at new turns and risks, the involvement of an entire book. This *Collected Poems*, then, is not the best way—nor should it be the first way—to read Walcott. It is fine to have *Another Life* readily available again, and the selection from recent books will be sufficient to impress any newcomer. There are poems here—"The Sea Is History," "Egypt, Tobago," "The Star-Apple Kingdom," "North and South," "Beachhead," "Europa," "The Hotel Normandie Pool," and all of *Midsummer*—that continue to dazzle, and would likely be in anyone's anthology, not just in Walcott's own.

That these poems are bunched toward the end of this book is only a sign of Walcott's increasing mastery. His style now has a range and a grave radiance that transfigure the smallest detail. And though his poems are built up from details, they have challenged their own fluency by addressing the large intractable problems of modern history—exile, injustice, the lurid terrorisms of the mind, the ordinary treasons of the heart. If art remains his focus and refreshment, sometimes too exclusively, it is because he sees art as that place where the dilemmas of a life have been most urgently portrayed. And it is his warrant for transcendence. Implicit even in his poems of evocative description or political commentary is a nearly sacramental view of human life. A coil of traffic, a cat's eye, the baptistery doors—anything may suggest a vision beyond the image. In this conclusion to "The Season of Phantasmal Peace," it is a flight of birds, a passage of light:

it was the light
that you will see at evening on the side of a hill
in yellow October, and no one hearing knew
what change had brought into the raven's cawing,
the killdeer's screech, the ember-circling chough
such an immense, soundless, and high concern
for the fields and cities where the birds belong,
except it was their seasonal passing, Love,
made seasonless, or, from the high privilege of their birth,
something brighter than pity for the wingless ones
below them who shared dark holes in windows and in houses,
and higher they lifted the net with soundless voices
above all change, betrayals of falling suns,
and this season lasted one moment, like the pause
between dusk and darkness, between fury and peace,
but, for such as our earth is now, it lasted long.

J. D. McCLATCHY

J. D. McClatchy's newest book of poems, *Stars Principal*, will be published this spring by Macmillan.

Reconsideration: Nicola Chiaromonte

INNOCENCE AND THE INTELLECTUAL

BY LIONEL ABEL

NICOLA Chiaromonte, who died in 1972, was a deeply reflective Italian intellectual who gave the quality of an art form to the journalism he published in *Partisan Review* during the 1940s, and in *Tempo Presente*, the review he edited in Rome during the 1950s and 1960s. He was in his late 30s when I first met him, in the winter of 1942, at the home of Dwight Macdonald. Nicola was then a refugee from three different countries: Mussolini's Italy, Franco's Spain (he had fought for the Republic), and Nazi-occupied France. Though he had landed in New York only a few months before, I had already heard talk about him, and I remember looking him over closely while we were introduced. Was he indeed as he had been described?

He seemed quite mature, as we expect a man of intellect to be, except for one particular trait: a markedly nervous and rather somber impatience, which told me, when I had gotten to know him better, that ripeness for him was by no means everything. The man I saw that night was short, dark, handsome—beautiful even, with a beauty that was restrained and reassuring, not incisive and overbearing, like the beauty we expect to lift us high into romance. I liked everything I heard him say, especially what he said about the beauty of Paris, which he put above the beauty of Rome; we became friends, I think, when he spoke of it. For my part I can say truthfully: it was friendship at first sight.

In New York Nicola was sought after, praised, published, wined, dined, regularly consulted. Even when he attacked Marxism—sacrosanct to most of those in the circle he moved in—he had at least one steadfast supporter in Dwight Macdonald. Nicola cut a prestigious figure in New York between 1942 and 1948, after which he returned to Europe for good, first to Paris and then to Rome. He certainly did not go back to Europe because of a failure on our part to make him welcome.

Considerations of a moral order, rather, made Nicola dissatisfied with his life in New York. Here he had a role to play,

Lionel Abel is the author most recently of *The Intellectual Follies* (W. W. Norton).

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and played it well, and as far as I could see then, was by no means unhappy; but I think he believed that what he called his "duties" could be discharged only in Europe. At last, in 1948, he found the means to return to Europe with his American wife, Miriam. She, for her part, was convinced that they would both be happier in Paris; as things turned out, they were not.

Comfortably installed in a fine apartment on Île St. Louis, with a job at UNESCO, Nicola was much more dispirited in Paris than I had ever known him to be in New York. Perhaps there were personal reasons for his unhappiness that I knew nothing about. But this much I did know—Nicola had placed European thought and European politics above American thinking and American politics. It was the Europeans he wanted to influence, morally, intellectually, politically. But, powerful in New York, he suddenly found that he could not be a force in Paris. His voice, still heard in America, was hardly heard in France at all, even when he spoke French. For example, an Italian chronicle of his that Jean-Paul Sartre published in *Les temps modernes* was widely discussed in New York City and barely noticed in Paris.

WHY? The group that had welcomed Nicola in New York—I belonged to it—was made up in the main of convinced Marxists. Those of us with some learning—some were in fact more scholarly than Nicola—should no doubt have looked with much more care into the pre-Marxist texts on social reform, but in most instances had not. Many of us had read Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Poverty*, and most of us thought it refuted, in fact completely destroyed, by Marx's *The Poverty of Philosophy*. In general we thought that among the 19th-century social reformers Marx was the real intellectual genius. But not Nicola, who figured for us as a kind of representative of pre-Marxist social thought.

Still, it was not just Nicola's close reading of Fourier, Saint Simon, and Proudhon that made him interesting to me, as to so many of New York's writers and radicals. The main thing was Nicola's very special attitude as a radical, which made him stand out from others. Nicola judged a possible engagement in politics as a writer might judge a possible play, novel, or poem. A writer asks himself, "Will I be carried away in the writing of it?" When a line of political action was proposed to Nicola, he would ask himself, "Will I be carried away by the deeds it requires?" There are not a few intellectuals who have criticized the Bolsheviks for their ruthless use of questionable means. But Nicola, and his close friend the Italian savant Andrea Caffi (they influenced each other), are the only persons I ever have heard say—and they would say it as if they were talking practical politics—that in social action toward desirable ends the means employed *always* had to be admirable. This was the message Nicola brought to New York in 1941. In 1948, however, it was not a message that Paris, with Hitler behind but more of Stalin still conspicuously ahead, was willing to hear.

It was in 1948 that Jean-Paul Sartre announced to the world that the standard he was going to use in social and literary matters would be fundamentally a political standard. The value he stressed was "responsibility." Sartre understood perfectly well what his position entailed, and he did not back away from its difficulties. Writers were to be held "responsible," and if poets, depending on inspiration, could not be, then poetry was just not part of "literature." In political action, moreover, one could not be too critical of the means employed, as Sartre made clear in his play *Dirty Hands*. The position taken by Sartre was, in short, contrary in every respect to the one held by Nicola. And Sartre was in intellectual control of Paris. Moreover, Marxism was new to Sartre and to his friends, who were then just trying it out. The intellectuals Nicola had charmed in New York were familiar with Marxism; some knew nothing else, and one of them, Macdonald, was already sick of it. It would be many years before Parisian intellectuals would become similarly critical. So the situation in which Nicola found himself in Paris was quite hopeless.

HE remained unhappy until the time—I think it was in 1950—when, returning to Rome, he was again able to guide a group of radical writers. These he attracted to him, with the help of Ignazio Silone, around *Tempo Presente*, the review he established in 1956. But even in Rome the long reach of Sartre was a problem for Nicola, and kept many young Italian writers from even coming to grips with his views.

I think it was the intellectual ascendancy of Sartre in Europe that Nicola was trying to counter when he wrote the essays in *The Paradox of History: Stendhal, Tolstoy, Pasternak and Others*, just republished by the University of Pennsylvania Press. These essays, particularly the pieces on Stendhal and Tolstoy, are beautifully written, and Joseph Frank is quite right when he says in his preface that they constitute a kind of literary criticism seldom come upon. What is unusual is the seriousness with which Nicola deals with the *thought* of these writers—also of Pasternak, Malraux, and du Garde. He is quite aware of their literary skills; but since the display of these skills was not their main interest, he observes, it would not be his.

Sartre had made "historical" struggles

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Apollo's First Altar

Not even the gods can stand solitude. When Apollo
returned to Aliartos after slaying the Python and by himself
built his own altar in the sacred wood, beside the fountain of Telephusa,
he looked all around him: not a soul. Lord of the land,
oh yes, but alone—so he reflected. Who will run the place?
Who will enjoy its mysterious sayings? And, above all,
who will admire his rich head of hair falling over his shoulders?

So he obliged the first ship passing by on its way to Pylos
to run aground near Chrissa and sink in the sandy depths there,
and he held, as guards for his temple and its prophets, those
who had sailed from heavily wooded Knossos to sell
tobacco and oil—even if they were just small-time merchants, ignorant young men
and simple rowers.
That's how it happened. And they decorated
Apollo's first temple, interpreted every which way
his great oracles. That statue of him, in the museum,
shows him with a double-minded smile hovering between bliss and tolerance.

The Decay Of The Argo

Tonight, during talk of how all things age, fade, cheapen—
beautiful women, heroic deeds, poems—we suddenly remembered
the celebrated ship that they brought to Corinth one spring evening,
now eaten through, the paint gone, oarlocks removed,
all patches, holes, memories. The great procession through the forest,
with torches, wreathes, flutes, athletic games for the young. Truly a grand offering
to Poseidon's temple, that aged Argo. The night lovely, and the chanting of the priests.
An owl hooted above the temple's pediment, and the dancers leaping with light feet
on the ship, their mimicry of crude action with unbecoming charm, the movement
of non-existent oars, the sweat and the blood. Then an old sailor
spat at the ground by his feet, moved off to the grove nearby and took a leak.

Requiem On Poros

The gods are being forgotten. And if we happened to remember Poseidon tonight
as we returned to the desolate shores of Kalavria,
it's because over here, in the sacred grove one July evening,
while oars gleamed in the moonlight and one could hear
the guitars of ivy-crowned young men in the rowboats,
here, in this pine-covered spot, Demosthenes took poison—
he, a stammerer, who struggled until he became the best orator of the Greeks,
and then, condemned by the Macedonians and the Athenians, learned, in the course of one night,
the most difficult, the greatest art of all: to be silent.

YANNIS RITSOS
—translated by Edmund Keeley

all-important, citing the ultimate authority of Marx. Nicola replied that it is precisely these struggles that we do not understand. His book studied the views of history that the 19th and 20th centuries substituted for the traditional religious view, the new gospel of history as it was represented in the works of some of the great modern novelists, particularly those who had tried to accept the new gospel but finally found it impossible to believe. It was the attempt to believe in history that interested Nicola. Thus he characterized the epoch as one of bad faith, by which he meant not faith in badness, which was a part of it, but badness in faith, which for him was the willingness to credit the incredible and admit the inadmissible.

A serious error of judgment was Nicola's support of Tolstoy's total skepticism about history as against Marx's dogmatically held view of it. If we discard his dogmatism, Marx was much more right than Tolstoy, especially in his notion that historical development has some relation to reason. If socialism has not followed the great world wars, as socialists predicted it would, this does not mean they were completely mistaken, as Nicola, in writing *The Paradox of History*, evidently thought they were. Indeed, the result of the great wars has been close to what socialists aimed at: the end of colonialism and the rise of the welfare state—in sum, a slightly more rational world.

What troubles me most about this valuable book, however, are Nicola's findings about Stendhal. My impression is that he constantly overstates the negative elements he can find in Stendhal's thinking. Such elements are undeniably there, but they are more important to Nicola than they could have been for the novelist. In "Fabrizio at Waterloo," the very first essay in *The Paradox of History*, Nicola concludes that Stendhal has sharply limited the possibilities of the soul: either it remains innocent, reserving its illusions, or it must yield to the often cynical, and in any case harsh, criticism of experience. Now, of course experience and innocence are tragically at variance, and life would be even more tragic than it is if no other condition of the soul were possible. But Stendhal was perfectly aware that something else is possible—that, as Pascal said, purity is not the same as innocence, and purity is not excluded by experience.

In *The Charterhouse of Parma* the figure who represents a purity of feeling not

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made foolish by innocence is Count Mosca. His feeling for the Duchess, and also for Fabrizio, whom he protects as a service to the woman he loves, is in no way less fine or musical than the "captivating arias" in the soul of the romantically deluded Fabrizio, in which Nicola tells us the reader of *The Charterhouse* "hears the voice of truth." Here is Nicola:

> . . . "real life," filled as it is with the deadly dregs of personal profit, utilitarian calculation (as exemplified by the clear-headed Count Mosca and the Marquis de la Mole) and tinselled philistinism, is the enemy of spontaneous action. Yet the world would be an insubstantial fairy tale without them.

But the world without even the possibility of a Count Mosca would be more tragic than I have found it to be. And it is simply not true that in Stendhal's understanding of the world spontaneous action is the monopoly of the innocent and romantically deluded. Count Mosca is the novel's real hero. For his support of innocence and its illusions as against hardheadedness in politics, I became critical of Nicola's influence, especially over Dwight Macdonald. Nicola made Macdonald feel more and more justified as he became less and less responsible. In his famous essay "The Root Is Man," Macdonald railed against any long-term political project that does not call for honorable actions right here and now. But if it was Nicola's view that Dwight had in mind, I think he misunderstood it. He was trying to fashion an ideology out of what to Nicola was a personal conviction. Worst of all, Macdonald seemed to be saying that good sentiments can make good politics, which is about as true as the notion that good sentiments can make good literature.

Consider another example. During the last years of World War II, which Macdonald always refused to support, he published an article by the Italian antifascist Gaetano Salvemini, accusing the British, and Churchill in particular, of having deliberately ordered their bombers to hit the working-class sections of Milan. Their aim, according to Salvemini, was to bleed the Italian proletariat so that there would be less chance of a working-class revolution after the war. The publication of this piece, which to my knowledge Nicola did not oppose, was a perfect instance of "irresponsibility." There was not the slightest evidence at the time, nor has any been turned up since, that there was a "class" motivation for the bombing of Milan. (And there were no "smart" bombs then, so it was quite impossible for bombing squads to target a particular class.) Salvemini might just as well have charged the British with Protestant spite against Catholic art, in view of the damage done to the paintings of Florence in the British bombings of it.

ONE theme of Nicola's work that he perhaps should have communicated more widely, and which he shared with Raymond Aron, who made excellent use of it in his political writings, was the idea that what he called "depth politics," which he associated with Marx and then with Freud, should be avoided at all costs. What is "depth politics"? It is the privileging of some facts over others in the name of a hypothesis that is not yet proven true. "Some people," Nicola wrote, "must at all costs see what is not there." An example would be Sartre's refusal to protest the Russian gulag system in 1949, while admitting the enslavement of one out of every 12 Soviet citizens, his argument being that such protest would serve to hide the less obvious inhumanities of the West. But I think Nicola's own statements on depth politics are clearer than any example I could cite. I quote from his letter to Andrea Caffi in an earlier book, *The Worm of Consciousness*, which I hope will find a wider audience as a result of the interest now shown in *The Paradox of History*.

> Not long ago I came across the following quotation from Marx: "The 'popular' economist thinks he is making a great discovery when he dismisses [an] explanation . . . by confidently saying that *in appearance* things are different. It is as though he were proud of bowing before appearances and of *regarding them as the 'final explanation.'*" I shall not trouble to defend the "popular" economist, who, as far as I know, could easily be wrong (or right). What disturbs me is the contemptuous contrast of the *"final explanation"* and *"appearances."* I do not see this as the calm assertion of the scientist who accounts for *appearances*. . . . I see it as quite the contrary: as the statement of the dogmatic thinker who has opposed the "apparent" reality of appearances with the "superior" truth of the system he has constructed. Moreover, when we talk about social reality and not about nature, the distinction between "appearances" and "reality" (not to mention the claim to possess the "final explanation") seems to me very dubious. To start with, the illusions men have about their "real" situation have no less "reality" (practical consequences) than their "final explanations," for in society we are faced with men's *real* errors no less than with their true opinions. . . .

The effort to recall the ideas of a friend—dead for more than a decade—easily becomes, without one's noticing, a failed effort to resurrect the man himself. And for a while one may have the illusion that one has actually succeeded. A voice was heard speaking—one's own—but it seemed so like his. Did I mistake or misstate the views he cherished?

Take and keep, we've been told. But we cannot keep. The living, the vivid, we cannot retain. Anyway we do not really want to enclose them, as the Egyptians did their dead, in grandiose stone, sealed against time, ironically packed with oblivion. All that we can ask of ourselves, all that our friends require, is that we remain steadfast when the vivid fades, and not be false to our recollections, and not join up with the trivial and the grim in their bound-to-be-successful campaign for forgetting. □

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

tody can be made. Yet in Neely's solution, there is no mention of either.

The argument that children of tender years will not be required to testify under this approach is specious at best, because most are not competent to testify. Further, the court is not required to place the child on the witness stand, but may interview the child in chambers and avoid the pressures cited by Neely.

Our main concern in each case should be the individual child, in the individual case, in the individual circumstances. To ignore that concern for the sake of a general rule that seems to exist only to make life easier for judges is to sacrifice individuality and once again say to children that in the scheme of things they do not really mean very much.

JOHN P. MURPHY
District Judge
North Platte, Nebraska

WE WERE DEAD WRONG

To the editors:

Regarding "The Hissing of Summer Lawns" (March 10): please inform J. Anthony Lukas and your copy editors that "the late" Lewis Mumford celebrated his 90th birthday last October, and no doubt intends to celebrate his 91st this year.

MICHAEL J. CROSBIE
New York, New York

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Sleazeball Cinema

AS A CONNOISSEUR of bad cinema, I was delighted when two new movies about Washington opened a few weeks ago. After high school melodrama and rap/break-dancing films, the Washington thriller (*Three Days of the Condor* typifies the genre) is the best exploitation cinema around. So imagine my dismay at discovering that *Power* and *The Imagemaker* weren't thrillers at all. Having endured both, I'm prepared to declare them the forerunners of a new school of bad filmmaking: sleazeball cinema. Both depict the corrupt lives of overpaid political consultants, lingering over their designer suits and stretch limos. In *The Imagemaker* Michael Nouri, who starred in *Flashdance*, plays an ex-White House aide, perhaps modeled on Michael Deaver or Ed Rollins, who is cashing in as a private consultant. Lots of people are trying to kill him, although their reasons aren't entirely clear. I won't give away the surprise ending, but Nouri stages a major media event utilizing a Crazy Eddie warehouse full of video cameras, stereos, and VCRs. All this equipment is the real star of the film. But my favorite character is a crippled electronics wizard who is mysteriously bumped off after he helps Nouri test a tape of the president cutting a deal with a powerful labor leader (a reference to the Jackie Presser fiasco?). The same stereotype of a wheelchair-bound technical genius appears in *Power*, this time as an Orthodox Jew. Both characters are renditions of the hacker-hero figure in the recent spate of computer glorification films. Speaking for those who stare at video display terminals all day, I'll say we appreciate the attempt to glamorize our alienation. But computers really are dull. When directors start using them in the place of sex and violence to titillate an audience, it's time to get worried.

THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN the films don't end with the exploitation of the personal computer. *Power* was originally going to be called "Imagemaker," which would have been a better title, since Sidney Lumet's film isn't about power at all. Mainly it's about money and office furniture. Richard Gere plays a media wizard who promises to get candidates elected to the office of their choice for a fee of $25,000 per month, plus 15 percent of their advertising budgets and expenses. The somnambulant Gere manages to make all that money without moving his arms much, except when he's banging drumsticks on a coaster aboard his private jet. Anyway, the film means to condemn the extraordinary power wielded by Washington consultants, lobbyists, and political promoters of all types. But since it neglects to question the abundant (and mostly self-generated) hype about their abilities, the movie bolsters the political consultant myth. If Lumet were really out to attack political consultants, he would have cast Gere as a Washington gigolo who makes millions hustling candidates with his electronic mojos. But I suppose that's too much to expect from a film whose plot hinges on an OPEC conspiracy against solar energy. In 1986?

SLEAZEBALLS MAY HAVE won the battle at the movies, but they're losing the war in the streets. A few weeks ago members of a Republican youth group called the Young Conservative Alliance demonstrated outside the public relations firm of Gray and Company to protest its lobbying on behalf of the government of Angola and its alleged negotiations with the Soviet Union. The protesters were wearing three-piece suits and chanting, "Robert Gray, you can't hide / We charge you with genocide." Perhaps they were also referring to Baby Doc, since the firm represents Haiti as well. The young Republicans say that Gray and Company employees fooled them into leaving by posing as a Scripps-Howard camera crew. Thinking they'd made the evening news, the activists packed up and went home. Frank Mankiewicz, who is a vice president in the firm, joked that they were the "first yuppie demonstrators" who "had to hurry and get home because the Cuisinart repairman was coming." Their Cuisinarts fixed, the yuppies were back a few days later chaining themselves to a staircase in the lobby.

FIRMS LIKE GRAY'S are supposedly willing to represent anybody with money. Not anymore. Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly voluntarily dropped a $950,000 account with the Philippine government before Marcos fled the country, according to the *Washington Post*. But the *Washington Times* caught a significant detail that the *Post* forgot to mention: the firm is keeping the cash. Now that Marcos has departed, who really cares if Paul Manafort and his partners bilk the dictator of a few of his millions?

MANAFORT ALSO REPRESENTS Jonas Savimbi, which must put him at odds with Gray over the Angola issue. In the interest of greater cooperation between consultants, here's an idea for a Gray/Manafort joint venture. The firms should work together to arrange a dictator swap: Marcos lives out his remaining days in Haiti. Cory Aquino gets Duvalier, a dictator to be named later, and an undisclosed amount of covert military aid. I'm sure that the two would be comfortable living out their remaining days in balmy, Third World countries with devastating social and economic problems similar to ones they caused.

THE HOTTEST RUMOR in Washington is that the White House pressured NASA to launch the shuttle in time for the president's State of the Union address. According to the version I heard, Christa McAuliffe was going to be one of the American heroes Reagan honored at the end of his speech. Chief of Staff Donald T. Regan is supposed to have told someone at NASA to "get the thing up." According to the *Wall Street Journal*, spokesman Larry Speakes called the story "the most vicious and distorted rumor I have ever heard." Now everyone is wondering why Speakes used the word "distorted" instead of a word like "untrue." Speakes added more fuel to the rumor by telling reporters that they would be "irresponsible" to pursue the story any further. In the face of a less than categorical denial by the White House, that's like appealing to the wolves' better instincts to leave the sheep alone. Of course, the rumor is farfetched. I think it began with a column in the *Nation* just after the disaster. Alexander Cockburn wrote that "it was presumably the thought of President Reagan tilting his words up to McAuliffe in his State of the Union message that prompted NASA officials to send up the Challenger even though they were well aware that the freezing temperatures were perilous in the extreme." Weeks later, Cockburn's surmise has become practically an order from Don Regan to blow up the astronauts. Give the guy a break. We don't want to drive him into consulting, do we?

J.W.

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